

Media Release



FUTURE FARM
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Harvester designer appointment shows mallee industry means business

Biosystems Engineering has been appointed by the Future Farm Industries CRC (FFI CRC) to design and manufacture a prototype mallee harvester.

FFI CRC CEO Kevin Goss said the appointment of the specialist engineering company is the clearest sign yet the commercial viability of the mallee industry is close to being realised.

“Mallee trees planted on WA wheatbelt farms for over two decades have now gained recognition as a cheap and clean energy resource for electricity production and more recently as carbon sinks,” Mr Goss said.

“Interest in mallees is expected to increase as farmers continue to look for new income sources in a drying climate – particularly incomes that have complementary on-farm environmental benefits.”

“FFI CRC will make mallees more profitable for farmers with the world’s most efficient biomass harvester becoming commercially available from as early as 2011,” Mr Goss said.

The appointment of *Biosystems Engineering* is part of a \$1.5 million Low Emission Energy Development (LEED) funding agreement with the Western Australian Government to develop a fully commercial harvester able to convert standing mallees into chipped biomass.

“*Biosystems Engineering* is an Australian company with recognised expertise in innovation technology within the agricultural, water and energy sectors with an emphasis on generating commercial outcomes,” Mr Goss said.

“Through this appointment they are now responsible for the design, fabrication and field testing of a new prototype mallee harvester.

“Discussions are already underway with a global agricultural machinery manufacturer to provide the base vehicle for the prototype as a forerunner to commercial production.”

The need for a mallee harvester was identified by the WA Oil Mallee Association which led to the development of the original prototype in the late 1990s and early 2000s with major input from the late Don Stanley and well known WA machinery developer, *Dumbleyung Engineering’s* Harley Pedderick.

Adapted from a modified sugar cane harvester purchased by growers, this machine revealed that a commercial harvester needed to follow a single-row process to cut trees close to the ground and then chip them in a continuous flow.

“The design of the new prototype will incorporate these lessons and make use of recycled parts in the bench testing process,” Mr Goss said.

“WA farmers and industry will have the chance to observe its field testing in early 2010.”

FFI CRC is currently seeking private partners to provide additional investment to assist in the development and commercialisation of the mallee harvester. For more information, visit: www.futurefarmcrc.com.au

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