

# Media Release

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FUTURE FARM  
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## **New plants to help farmers in drier times and reduce livestock emissions**

Four new varieties of the perennial birdsfoot trefoil are set to give Australian farmers a head start in remaining productive in a drying climate.

These same plants may also be able to reduce the carbon footprint of livestock that eat them.

Future Farm Industries CRC (FFI CRC) Pasture Ecologist Graeme Sandral (NSW DPI) said the plant varieties will give producers more options on acid soils and land prone to drought or waterlogging.

“Results from research conducted in South Australia clearly show birdsfoot trefoil is more robust than white clover in the drier areas and out performs lucerne when grown in acid or waterlogged conditions,” Graeme said.

The qualities of these new varieties makes them well suited to the tablelands and slopes of New South Wales and Victoria through to south eastern South Australia and south western Western Australia.

“This adds up to about eight million hectares where no perennial legume currently exists,” Graeme said.

Although these new varieties can outperform white clover where the summer drought is prolonged and lucerne in acid soils or waterlogged soils, birdsfoot trefoil should be seen as a species that is best suited to environments where currently no perennial legume options exist.

These plants can also help farmers adapt to climate change due to the added bonus is that birdsfoot trefoil may be able to help reduce greenhouse gases caused by livestock.

“Currently, agriculture contributes to about 17 percent of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions with about 63 percent being methane,” Graeme said.

“Research has shown that livestock on a birdsfoot trefoil diet, when compared to more traditional diets such as ryegrass, produce 32 percent less methane per kilogram of milk solids. The levels of condensed tannins in the plants are also high enough to protect livestock against bloat.”

The FFI CRC in collaboration with AWI has produced four birdsfoot trefoil cultivars that will be commercialised via a tender later in 2009. So far there has been very strong interest shown by domestic and international seed companies.

An article that goes into greater detail about these new drought-adapted plants feature in the June 2009 edition of *Focus on Perennials* magazine.

Electronic copies can be downloaded from: [www.futurefarmcrc.com.au](http://www.futurefarmcrc.com.au)

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