

Media Release



FUTURE FARM
INDUSTRIES CRC
PROFITABLE PERENNIALS™ FOR AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPES

15 August 2008

Prince Charles's quoting of WA's salinity problem needs to be put into context

Recent comments by Prince Charles about huge salinisation issues in Western Australia being caused by the excessive approaches of modern agriculture need to be viewed in a broader context.

Future Farm Industries CRC (FFI CRC) CEO Kevin Goss said while his statement on the cause of salinity is true, it overlooks farmers' actions to combat salinity over several decades.

"It's safe to say that extensive land clearing, which has occurred throughout the history of Western Australian agriculture, had exacerbated the salinity problem already present in the landscape." Mr Goss said.

"However, what needs to be pointed out is that farmers have been taking measures to control the spread of salinity through revegetation to lower water tables, no till cropping and the introduction of perennial plant based farming systems."

These measures are capable of making agriculture more efficient at using rainfall that will bring groundwater levels back into balance.

"Prince Charles is familiar with some of these initiatives, as he visited FFI CRC, known then as CRC Salinity, in 2005," Mr Goss said.

"As part of his visit, he was taken on tour to view research that showed how saltbush can be grown as fodder for sheep on salt-affected land and help farmers manage their drought risk."

While farmers are making changes to their land to stop the spread of salinity, recent droughts coupled with predictions of a prevailing dryer climate mean salinity is likely to become less of a threat.

"Despite the declining threat of salinity, research done by FFI CRC and its predecessor, CRC Salinity, have given farmers new land-use options that are just as well suited to providing productivity gains and environmental benefits under a drying climate with variable rainfall as they are in saline and waterlogged conditions," Mr Goss said.

Media Enquiries: Greg Lawrence, T: 0429101 675 E: greg.lawrence@futurefarmcrc.com.au
Further information: www.futurefarmcrc.com.au

Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre aims to transform Australian agriculture and rural landscapes by developing and applying Profitable Perennials™ technologies to innovative farming systems and new regional industries.
