

# Research and ideas shared at salinity forum



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**H**eld during late March and early April in Adelaide, South Australia, the 2nd International Salinity Forum provided researchers from the Future Farm Industries CRC (FFI CRC) and former CRC Salinity researchers with an ideal opportunity to share their research with a highly receptive audience. FFI CRC had a visible presence with a perennially-green booth in the Forum's Expo area.

The CRC was well represented with many researchers and postgraduate students attending, giving papers, or presenting posters at the Forum. The quality of their work was reflected by the number of prizes awarded to FFI CRC staff and students:

- Best Poster Award – Ed Barrett-Lennard (pictured top right), Tim Colmer and Sarita Bennett
- Best Student Poster – Bree Wilson
- Best Student Presentations – Nikki Mouat and Richard Bennett.

The Forum also featured the official launch of the FFI CRC's *Saltland Prospects* publication and a speech from the 2008 Farrer Memorial Medal winner, and former CRC Salinity CEO, Emeritus Professor Philip Cocks, on the failure of democratic institutions to deal with climate change.

Seven concurrent sessions were held throughout the Forum, giving delegates a

wide selection of presentations from which to choose.

International scientists were well represented at the Forum, especially those from the USA. FFI CRC Research Director Dr Mike Ewing, said it was apparent that international researchers were more strongly focused on irrigation salinity issues.

"Australia is different, in that dryland salinity represents a bigger part of our interest," Dr Ewing said.

"There are very large areas of salinity in Asia, particularly India, Pakistan and China, associated with the major river irrigation systems that attract a lot of attention."

Dr Ewing said the 2nd International Salinity Forum was a special event that encouraged a cross-disciplinary approach to problem solving. It brought together a substantial body of new information and it was evident from the presentations that saltland is being better utilised. Rather than being seen as useless, saltland is now viewed more as something that can be productively managed as part of an agricultural system.

"The difficulties in applying preventative strategies through recharge control was a particular feature and there was a telling paper by Richard George," Dr Ewing said. "The paper basically concluded that the circumstances in which tree planting would be an effective strategy for salinity prevention were rare.

"We need to move away from the idea that we can justify these interventions in terms of salinity management alone – for long-term forestry to be an option it has to be profitable as well. In moving from CRC Salinity to FFI CRC we have taken on board these balances in a much more integrated way.

"Speaking at the Forum, CSIRO's Tom Hatton made the point that salinity as a single driver of natural resource management, and as an icon of environmental issues, no longer has the 'pulling power' it previously had. It's about getting things into context – this can be a challenging view for some, others have seen it this way for some time."

Dr Ewing went on to say that in Australia we have moved away from rhetoric which implied the need for panicked actions towards delivering strategies that provide the greatest returns on any public or private investment. We now have concrete details about how salinity can be managed across a wide range of sub-environments in Australia, as well as greater details about what realistic prevention options are available.

A selection of papers from the ISF are available on-line at [www.futurefarmcrc.com.au/events](http://www.futurefarmcrc.com.au/events) ↘

## More information

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