

Media Release



FUTURE FARM
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Salt-tolerant wheat research profiled at UWA Field Open Day

Giving farmers the option to grow wheat on saline and waterlogged parts of their property is one of the ways that Australian agriculture can remain productive in a drying climate.

Working hard to make that option a reality is the Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre (FFI CRC) with its salt-tolerant wheat breeding program.

FFI CRC Research Director Dr Mike Ewing said increased demands to grow food on a landscape in which water is fast becoming a scarce resource means farmers want to make all parts of their land as productive as possible.

“Salt and waterlogged tolerant wheat could open up land previously considered as having low productivity value – which is particularly the case in many parts of Western Australia,” Dr Ewing said.

Led by Dr Tim Colmer (University of Western Australia), the program is in collaboration with Rafiq Islam (University of Adelaide) who has crossed wheat with a tolerant wild relative, sea barleygrass, which has a high degree of salt and waterlogging tolerance.

“The success of this challenging exercise, known as ‘interspecific crossing,’ has largely been because of Dr Islam’s skills and experience,” Dr Ewing said.

“The resulting grain is not of high enough quality to be milled into flour but can be used as a feed source for livestock.”

Encouraging results in the greenhouse from the crossbreeds produced, known as amphiploids, has seen the project move to test salinity and waterlogging tolerances in the field in late 2008; and further breeding work to improve fertility at the University of Adelaide.

The results of this project to date, and other research, will be on display at the University of Western Australia’s Institute of Agriculture (IOA) Shenton Park Field Station Open Day on Friday, 8 August.

The Open Day will showcase IOA’s research covering such areas as alternative oil seeds, herbicide resistance, canola, barley, legumes and animal behaviour monitoring.

Representatives from IOA, FFI CRC, Grower Group Alliance, Forest Products Commission and the Food Industry Association of WA will also be present.

Entry is free. For more information about the Open Day visit the IOA website: www.ioa.uwa.edu.au

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