

Media Release

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FUTURE FARM
INDUSTRIES CRC
PROFITABLE PERENNIALS™ FOR AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPES

Wanted: Harvester to kick start WA's Mallee industry

WA's fledging oil mallee industry is in need of a cost-effective harvest system – especially a purpose designed harvester.

Abundant in WA, oil mallees have enormous potential to yield a wide range of products such as ethanol, eucalyptus oil, activated carbon and charcoal, as well as electricity generation in the State's low rainfall regions.

Future Farm Industries CRC (FFI CRC) Researcher Rick Giles (WA Department of Environment and Conservation), who has been working on developing a harvesting system for more than a decade, said the industry has been seriously constrained by lack of a suitable machine.

"The mallee's small size and bushy nature means that traditional forestry and sugar cane harvesting methods are unsuitable," Mr Giles said.

"So we are looking for the same innovative nous that inspired the Smith brothers to invent the stump-jump plough more than 100 years ago, which opened up vast areas of Australia to farming."

FFI CRC CEO Kevin Goss believes Rick's work has been vital in identifying the cost obstacles that need overcoming before the industry is viable.

"WA already has 12,000 hectares of farmed oil mallees, successful demonstration of regional processing, and identified markets but no way to harvest and transport the crops commercially," Mr Goss said.

"Now is make or break time for the industry and a great opportunity to consolidate its research on harvesting technology."

Mr Goss believes the FFI CRC, in partnership with the Mallee Oil Company and the WA Department of Environment and Conservation is well placed to develop a prospectus for further investment.

The cost of developing a prototype harvester that leads to commercial production is anticipated to be \$5 million.

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