



Investors needed to launch WA's Mallee Industry

Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre (FFI CRC) is currently seeking partners to co-invest in the advancement of a breakthrough technology that will commercially underpin Western Australia's Mallee Industry – the development of a mallee harvester. For the last 20 years, mallee trees have been planted in the paddocks of the Western Australia wheatbelt to such an extent they now constitute a significant resource from which a commercial mallee industry can emerge.

The technology to process harvested mallees is already here. In 2005, Verve Energy successfully proved that mallee biomass can commercially generate electricity while producing activated carbon and eucalyptus oil. As a result, Verve Energy called for Expressions of Interest in May 2007 for investors to develop a \$50 million commercial-scale Integrated Wood Processing (IWP) Plant.

FFI CRC will also focus research efforts on developing the supply chain to ensure that a cost-efficient, whole-system approach is developed for the industry, one that covers harvest, roadside haulage, road transport and stockpiling.

Investors in this project will benefit from advanced knowledge of an innovative technology and its potential uptake by industry. They will also partner with a national R&D company with a high degree of proven expertise to develop a carbon and climate-responsive farming system.

About the Mallee Harvester project

In June 2008, the project entered an exciting phase when the Western Australian government announced it will provide \$1.5 million of funding through its Low Emission Energy Development (LEED) initiative. This funding, which is conditional to the CRC attracting additional private sector funding, will be used for the design, fabrication, commissioning and field testing of a new prototype harvester.

A prototype harvester was developed in Western Australia during the late 1990s and 2000s based on a modified cane harvester created by Dumbleyung Engineering. It showed that a commercial harvester would need to follow a single-row process that cuts the trees close to the ground and chips them in a continuous flow.



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By the end of the project, FFI CRC aims to have an operational harvester capable of reliably harvesting mallee trees at a high rate. The most efficient rate of production is anticipated to exceed 50 green tonnes/hour. The rate will be determined after further systems analysis, including the nature of the chipped biomass produced by the harvester, has been carried out. The anticipated timeframe for the development of the mallee harvester is:

- Design and manufacture of prototype – by December 2009
- Field testing of prototype on-farms – to June 2010
- Commercially produced harvester – by December 2010.

Investment benefits

Investors in the Mallee Harvester project will be involved in a breakthrough project that will pave the way for a commercially viable mallee industry in Australia. The industry is well placed to have a strong demand as Australia searches for alternative energy supplies. It will continue to be well supplied with trees as farmers continue to look for new income sources in a drying climate: particularly income streams that also provide environmental benefits.

Involvement in the project will provide additional benefits such as:

- Positioning the investor for a competitive response to the commercialisation of the harvester in 2010-11 and manufacturing, support and service delivery
- Input into an industry advisory panel guiding the project. This panel will include representatives from FFI CRC, the Oil Mallee Company, the farmer/growers' Oil Mallee Association, Verve Energy and the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation.

FFI CRC considers the Mallee Harvester project to be one of its key research projects and will be actively promoting its outcomes to the media and through FFI CRC magazines such as *Future Farm* and *Focus on Perennials*, which have a distribution of 10,000 and 5,000 respectively.

About FFI CRC

FFI CRC is a Cooperative Research Centre operating under the Australian Commonwealth Government's CRC Program that is developing innovative farming systems to set new standards in productivity and environmental protection. It also plays a vital role in helping Australian farmers adapt to the uncertainties of climate change. FFI CRC research targets farming practices in the low-medium and high rainfall regions of southern Australia. For more information, visit: www.futurefarmcrc.com.au



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