



Australian Government



Cotton Research and Development Corporation

Grains Research and Development Corporation

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation

Land & Water Australia

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

Sugar Research and Development Corporation

Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation

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MEDIA RELEASE
Tuesday 16 December 2008

Investing in the good wood

An eight-year, \$7.6 million investment to improve the testing and genetics of commercial pine breeding is estimated to yield in excess of \$239 million in benefits to the industry and the wider community.

The investment has been made across seven projects and is led by Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA). Previous investment in pine breeding research has yielded significant productivity gains, so investors are confident that this package of projects will be the same.

Chair of the FWPA Ronald Adams says while it will take up to 35 years to see the benefits of this investment, he is confident it will result in a more robust and sustainable forestry industry in Australia.

“Given the success of improving productivity during early phases of Australia’s pine breeding programs, we have shifted the focus of our investments towards improving the quality of harvested products,” Mr Adams said.

“The projects are a mix of genetic improvements and enhanced computerised testing to generate improved planting materials with quality characteristics.”

A key output has been TREEPLAN an analytical software tool that estimates the genetic values in trees, thereby improving selection efficiency. TREEPLAN looks for markers which indicate inferior wood quality associated with juvenile timber development, including high levels of spiral grain, low basic density, high moisture content before heartwood formation, and timber prone to warp. These markers are used to assist in choosing breeding trees to improve the quality of plantation timber.

According to Mr Adams, timber stiffness has suffered as a result of increasing the growth rate of some timber, and presents the biggest issue affecting wood quality.

“By improving the quality of pine sawn timber products, more of the timber we produce will meet structural grading thresholds, and overall profit for the industry will increase.



“Present indicators suggest that the research we are undertaking into juvenile wood predicts genetic gains of between 15 and 40% for whole core stiffness.

“Estimates suggest a one unit (GPa) increase in stiffness would increase industry profit by \$977 per hectare on a net present value basis. The research we are conducting is likely to result in a 0.5 unit increase in GPa, without impacting negatively on other production attributes.”

For Australia’s 985,000 hectare pine plantation industry, a profit increase of \$489 per hectare in Net Present Value is a welcome improvement.

“The project is estimated to yield a return of \$26 for each R&D dollar invested,” Mr Adams said.

“There are also environmental considerations if Australia’s forest and wood products industry can produce a competitive construction alternative to concrete, brick and steel in regards to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and maintaining the carbon sequestration function the industry already performs.”

The Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations’ Chairs (CRRDCC) is currently undertaking the most comprehensive evaluation to date of the \$500 million annual rural research and development investment.

CRRDCC chair Enzo Allara says the forest and wood industry evaluation and wider review of the nation’s research and development corporations highlights the success of the RDC model.

“The investment from government funds and industry levies generates significant commercial, environmental and social outcomes which underpin Australia’s agricultural productivity growth, strengthen rural and regional communities and benefit the broader Australian community,” Mr Allara said.

“The evaluation shows an average return of \$11 for every RDC dollar invested – a result of improvements in productivity, market access and supply chain performance.”

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