



COMMUNICATIONS BRANCH

Level 1, 117 Great Eastern Highway
RIVERVALE WA 6103

Phone: +61 8 9475 8882

Fax: +61 8 9475 8899

Email: jonathan.smith@fpc.wa.gov.au

Media statement

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Conference puts tropical forest research in the spotlight

A group of high-profile scientists has returned from a three-day tour of the east Kimberley where they investigated the potential for sustainable tree crops in Stage 2 of the Ord valley.

More than ninety scientists and delegates representing forestry industries from interstate and overseas have come to Western Australia to attend the second Australasian Forest Genetics Conference which will be officially opened tomorrow by Forestry Minister Terry Redman at Fremantle.

As part of a pre-conference tour, twenty delegates flew to Kununurra last week to inspect the Ord valley and assess the role that sustainable tree crops could have in the Stage 2 extension.

Tour group leader and Manager of Seed Technologies at the Forest Products Commission, Dr Liz Barbour, said tree crops in Stage 2 of the Ord extension had the potential to increase biodiversity and product variety by converting essential oils from solid timber into biodiesel, cellulose and pharmaceuticals.

“A balance of deep-rooted perennials with new agriculture crops will help sustain the long-term quality of soils and water supplies,” she said.

Dr Barbour said a number of factors were crucial for the success of long-term crops including scientific input through the capture of a genetic range of each crop species.

“Selection and breeding will optimise product quality, crop production and resistance to disease. Achieving the desired outcomes will depend on quality research, careful planning and implementation through a partnership of science and industry.” Dr Barbour said.

For more information contact:

JONATHAN SMITH

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Phone: 9475 8882 or 0408 944 760