

18/08/06

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| Senator the Hon Ian Campbell<br>Australian Minister for the Environment<br>and Heritage | Th Hon Peter McGauran MP<br>Australian Minister for Agriculture,<br>Fisheries and Forestry |
| The Hon Mark McGowan MLA<br>Western Australian Minister for the<br>Environment          | The Hon Kim Chance MLC<br>Western Australian Minister for Agruclture<br>and Food; Forestry |

Almost 25 million trees will be planted on farms across Western Australia by 2008 thanks to a \$64million project launched today by the Australian and Western Australian Governments.

Run in partnership by regional groups and the Forest Products Commission, the Strategic Tree-Farming initiative is the largest publicly-funded tree planting scheme in Australia. It is also the biggest project under the joint National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality program.

Australian and Western Australian Ministers celebrated the launch with communities and landholders today at a property near Mount Barker in the State's south.

Australian Ministers for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, said the initiative would develop new industries, create jobs and tackle salinity.

"It can be challenging to develop a fully commercial venture in places with lower rainfall and sandy soils, and that is where our project comes in," Senator Campbell said.

"Joint funding has already helped plant six million Maritime Pine, Sandalwood and Eucalypt seedlings. These hardy trees lower water tables, reduce salinity and when mature can be used for a range of products.

"The first phase of planting involved almost 100 landholders in the Northern Agricultural, Avon, South-West and South Coast regions, with many more expressing interest in work ahead.

"This project shows that the environment can be good for business, and business can be good for the environment."

Western Australian Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry Kim Chance said participating farmers received an income from the use of their land.

"This is a good mix of upfront payments and annuities for managing the trees, and profit-sharing for a return on the end products," Mr Chance said.

"Trees like Sugar Gum, Sydney Blue Gum and Sandalwood were chosen for this project because they have a proven ability to deliver commercial returns in medium rainfall zones.

"The gums are used for things like flooring, joinery and furniture, while Sandalwood is used for oils, perfumes, incense and crafts through local and export markets. In fact Sandalwood has been a major export for Western Australia since the mid-1800s.

"We are keen to see this project serve as a model for other States and hope it will also encourage private sector investment in sustainable, profitable industries.

"The trees will also provide long-term benefits over the life of the first rotation, which could be 30 years or more.

"One of the reasons we are providing direct payments is that we recognise crops will have off-farm advantages like better water quality and healthier soils.

"Plants like Maritime Pine thrive in deep-draining sands, which are susceptible to erosion and often the culprit of high groundwater recharge. This can affect both farms and the surrounding environment."

Western Australian Environment Minister Mark McGowan said planting in Esperance, for example, was helping protect the Lake Gore system, which was on the Ramsar list of internationally significant wetlands.

The Ministers congratulated regional groups on their co-operative approach and dedication to the project, and wished them well with the work ahead.

For more information, contact James Dallmeyer on (08) 9475 8882 or visit <http://www.fpc.wa.gov.au> For more information on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, visit <http://www.nrm.gov.au>

Detail on funding and planting locations is below.

Agriculture Minister's office - (08) 9213 6700  
Environment Minister's office - (08) 9222 9111