

Agroforestry partnership

CALM is investing \$5 million over the next three years in a major agroforestry project in partnership with farmers on the sandplains north of Perth.

The project is part of a 10-year plan to establish 20 000 hectares of pines between Perth and Dandaragan and the potential development of a timber processing industry in the region.

CALM is funding the initial stages of the northern sandplains project, but it is expected the private sector would become the major investor.

Environment Minister Kevin Minson launched the project at a land conservation district field day in Gingin.

The sandplains pines initiative brings to 4500 hectares a year the area farmers are planting to trees under sharefarming arrangements with CALM. The Department has established a new business unit, Pine Sharefarms, to run

the venture.

The first year involves planting 1.5 million radiata and pinaster pine seedlings over 1000 ha next winter and the three-year goal is to plant 7.5 million seedlings over 5000 ha.

The seedlings will come from CALM's Plant Propagation Centre at Manjimup, where select strains have been developed in tree-breeding programs over the past 40 years.

About \$500 000 a year will be spent in the local region through employing contractors to plant and maintain the plantations.

The development of downstream processing facilities such as Wesfi's veneer and medium-density fibre board plants in Perth, and the current expansion of Wespine's sawmilling capacity at Dardanup, reflect the long-term confidence the timber industry has in the State's pinewood industry.

The expansion of the plantation estate and investment by the private

sector go hand in glove, and operations such as the medium-density fibre board plant have created an end-use for virtually every tree that comes from these plantations.

The pine processing sector will continue to expand as further supplies of timber from new plantations such as those planned for the northern sandplains pine project come on stream.

Landowners entering sharefarming agreements with CALM will share in the revenue and gain all the land care benefits resulting from tree planting integrated into the rural landscape.

CALM research has shown on-farm productivity can increase as much as 40 per cent through integrating trees with existing farming operations.

This is because the mixture of tall, deep-rooted trees, and shallow-rooted, annual legume-based pastures, makes better use of natural resources such as

water, nutrients, sunlight and carbon.

The plantations also create a more favourable local climate for plants and farm animals, and the pines also help lower water tables and combat the spread of salinity.

The pine plantations will be thinned twice before a final harvest after 30 years. The first thinning at seven to 12 years will provide woodfibre for the medium-density fibre board industry.

More mature trees harvested at the second thinning — around year 18 to 20 — will be used as high-value sawlogs and for industrial uses. The final harvest at around year 30 will yield sawlogs and peeler logs for veneer production.

This will create significant regional development and employment opportunities.

CALM has estimated about 100 000 ha between Perth and Dandaragan could be suitable for pine plantations.



Denise Allan, manager of Pine Sharefarms, Gary Hartnett, Swan Region field manager for the Softwood Business Unit, and John Winchcombe, project officer with West Coast Pine Timberbelts were at the Gingin field day.



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