



Above: Morawa farmer Ian Pulbrook with a sample of the eucalypt seedlings he hopes can repair the environmental damage on rural land and put WA on the map as a producer of eucalyptus oil.

Morawa tree farmer has the good oil

By Dennis Bertoldo

MORAWA tree farmer Ian Pulbrook is at the forefront of an exciting new industry which has the potential to net millions of export dollars for WA and go some way to reversing the degradation of our farming land.

The Eucalypt Oil Tree Project started two years ago, with Morawa and Canna Shires forming a 'cell'.

There are six cells across WA, and each was selected by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM).

The aim of the project, which was launched last year, is to deliver more than eight million seedlings to the six cells over the course of two years.

With specially selected seedlings, CALM hopes to reduce salinity and improve soil quality in badly affected areas.

Mr Pulbrook and wife Lyn Rheinlander, are the CALM Project Consultants for Canna, and Mr Pulbrook also provides seedlings for the project via his Morawa Green Oil tree nursery.

"We need a good tree crop otherwise our farming system is going to fall in a bigger hole than it already is," said Mr Pulbrook.

"Primarily the program is a Landcare initiative, but it also has the secondary role of trying to establish a new industry for WA."

Mr Pulbrook said the oil found in eucalypt leaves can be used in solvents to replace unsafe chemicals, which are due to be phased out of production

over the next couple of years.

Mr Pulbrook said farmers were very keen on the project because it would enable them to work within existing systems, as the trees could be grown in existing high salt areas that have become redundant farm land and other areas effected by waterlogging.

Mr Pulbrook said the last planting of seedlings in the Canna cell, which ended in July, involved 42 farmers and 550,000 eucalypt seedlings.

Mr Pulbrook said people involved in the Canna project (which has a 40 kilometre radius with Canna its centre) were hoping to consolidate further next year and plant 1.2 million seedlings and attract even more farmers.

CALM sells the seedlings at a subsidised rate to farmers for 15 cents each. A balance payment for the estimated cost of 28 cents a seedling will only be recalled if the oil industry is successful and running at a profit.

Mr Pulbrook said two cents from each seedling sale is kept within the Canna cell to aid research.

The planning and site preparation to achieve this has started, and Mr Pulbrook expects the majority of ripping and layout plans to be completed by Christmas.

A steering committee, the Oil Mallee Growers' Association which includes CALM staff, farmers, Landcare representatives has been established with the goal of getting the eucalypt oil market off the ground.

It will look into potential export markets, research and development, keep farmers involved in the project informed, and attract new growers.

WA could top world in oil sales

CONSERVATION and Land Management (CALM) Farm Forestry Manager, John Bartle believes WA has the capability of topping total world-wide sales of eucalyptus oil in three years with its Eucalypt Oil Tree Project.

Mr Bartle said WA has the potential to out-sell all world leaders in eucalyptus oil if producers can find a way to grow and extract it at a lower cost.

Mr Bartle said presently Australia produces eucalyptus oil at \$5 a kilogram, yet the interna-

tional market price is \$2 a kilogram.

Traditionally, Australia has produced only small quantities of eucalyptus oil, mainly for medicinal use, but under the CALM tree project Australia could become a major exporter.

Because chemical solvents are being phased out over the next couple of years, the world market is looking for viable alternatives, and eucalypt-

subsequently would down by the year 2000."

Mr Bartle said CALM has worked with Alcoa Australia and Murdoch University to try and develop a crop with good solvent qualities, one that could compete internationally based on cost.

"Analyses have shown we should be able to compete on price," he said.

"However, it should

develop a suitable product.

"The real challenge is in the next 12 months, and we are hoping to make a lot of progress as far as developing and marketing a product we can sell on the world market," said Mr Bartle.

"We will be doing what we can to get our cost of extraction lower and productivity higher."

Mr Bartle hopes at the end of the five years the