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AVONGRO

Wheatbelt Tree Cropping Incorporated

economic development and sustainable production

Edition 3

Summer 2006

FOCUS ON A TREE FARMER

Aaron Edmonds, Chairman of the Avon Sandalwood Network

Aaron is a 32 year old, 4th generation farmer ('on both sides' he says), farming 2,000 hectares near Calingiri. Aaron studied Agricultural Science at the University of Western Australia for four years and in 2003 was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship during which he travelled the world to research ways in which broadacre agriculture might have to adapt to cope with rising oil prices. Since his return this has been a central concern of his, particularly for agriculture in the Western Australian wheatbelt.

Urea is the main nitrogen fertiliser farmers use in all their most profitable broadacre crops. 90% of the cost of producing urea comes from non-renewable oil or gas, 'it takes one litre of oil to make one kilogram of urea'. For urea to remain cheap, oil and gas need to remain cheap. Urea is used to produce the protein in the grains that are harvested, add to this the diesel inputs required to sow, harvest and transport annual crops and other inputs (not to mention the greenhouse gas emissions)... - Aaron sees this as the biggest sustainability threat in the wheatbelt. He says, 'Basically all the food we are eating is flowing from an oil or gas field somewhere in the world'.

Agriculture is currently a major energy consumer but Aaron is certain that it can be a net energy producer. 'We need to look at farming systems that produce energy rather than consume energy', says Aaron, 'and I feel we need to address this with a sense of urgency. As oil becomes more and more expensive, the risks and costs of farming large areas of land will increase accordingly'.

Aaron feels that in the future farmers will need to manage the land much differently, accounting for both more expensive oil based inputs and increasingly variable weather and rainfall. In his future as a farmer in the broadacre arid Australian landscape he can foresee the need to consider crops that are legume based meaning less reliance on manufactured fertilisers ('our major energy liability'). Another major key for the future is to incorporate perennials, particularly in marginal areas of profitability. Perennials integrated into the landscape can address a suite of environmental issues (salinity, water quality, erosion...) with the added bonus of a one-off energy cost of establishment and the ability to turn summer rainfall into a positive economic response.

Aaron is concerned with the poor ability of the current annual crops and pastures to handle increasingly variable seasons. Another key advantage of planting native tree crops is their inbuilt adaptation to our dry climate. He is a keen advocate of the Western Australian Sandalwood and other native tree crops. He feels that the drought proofing ability of the Sandalwood in particular make it an ideal perennial to integrate into his farming landscape. He thinks of sandalwood as an oilseed crop as it has an oil and protein rich nut which Aaron feels has the potential to supply both energy and food markets. Aaron has already planted 80 hectares of his farm to sandalwood and has a target of an additional 40 hectares per year.

Worldwide the most important commodity that is produced agriculturally is oil. On his visit to the Midwest of the United States, Aaron saw a large number of small industries based around soya bean oil; producing paints, inks, dyes, plastics, glues, polyester and biodiesel.

'You can imagine the scale and opportunities that exist for an area that produces oil and the opportunity to value-add that oil' Aaron says, 'With more intensive systems there will be more jobs and hopefully more economic returns. The flow on effects for the communities is what will keep those communities functioning'.

AVONGRO

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W E S T E R N A U S T R A L I A

A Word from the Chairman



Ian Hall, Chairman of AVONGRO
Wheatbelt Tree Cropping

Our second AGM has come and gone so firstly I would like to thank the outgoing committee for their hard work and patientice in helping AVONGRO develop a firm foundation for the future. Due to their commitment and perseverance, AVONGRO is in a strong financial and organisational position. Indeed the majority of the committee have renominated and are ready to continue to build AVONGRO's strength. Sincere thanks to outgoing committee member, Gerard McSweeney, who gave so generously of his time and knowledge of tree cropping in the very dry eastern section of the Avon region. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome experienced forester, Roger Underwood, to the committee. Roger is a well known forester with a lifetime of experience and we look forward to benefiting from his extensive knowledge.

The most important piece of news is that AVONGRO has managed to obtain additional funding from the commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry through the Natural Heritage Trust to work full-time. This will make an enormous difference in our effectiveness in the region. We now have confirmed funding for full-time work until at least June 2008.

We all know that it has been a difficult season for traditional farming. We are told that climate change is here to stay and it could be that as farmers we may need to take a look at how and what we farm in the future. My own family's move to include tree farming is a strategy to spread the risks and diversify our income. Summer rains certainly help our tree crops along so we can see a positive future in including them in our farming system. They also give us all the hard to measure benefits such as erosion control and utilising groundwater before it can collect subsurface salts and bring them to the surface somewhere on the farm where they are not wanted.

As farmers we will need to find ways to adjust to climate change if we want to remain on the land. I firmly believe that regional Australia needs us to keep farming and that by integrating tree crops into our farming systems we will be growing the resources that will create new industries and provide new jobs, thus attracting and keeping us and our families on the land. Yet individuals growing small amounts of tree crops scattered across the region will not provide sufficient resource for these industries. One of AVONGRO's key tasks is to facilitate and help coordinate the integration of commercial volumes of tree crops, in regional rotations, that will sustainably supply these new industries.

I invite you to work with us to develop this new future.

Ian Hall
AVONGRO Chairman

Visit www.avongro.com.au

Brushwood Industry update

AVONGRO has been working with farmers, a financial strategist, Greening Australia WA, the Avon Catchment Council, a Managed Investment Scheme (MIS) company and eastern States experts in an effort to facilitate the construction of a brushwood fence panel manufacturing facility in the Avon. Current developments are promising and it seems that will be financially viable to build a factory in the longer term.

The Avon Catchment Council/Greening Australia's Native Plant Industries Project has conducted an inventory of all known brushwood plantations in the Avon River Basin. Greening Australia, with support from the Department of Environment and Conservation and local landowners are investigating suitable forms of *Melaleuca* species for future plantation expansion. Through the Avon Catchment Council/Greening Australia Native Plant Industries project, subsidised brushwood seedlings are available for the 2007 planting season to help build up the resource base within a 100 kilometre radius of Meckering. It will be a fine balancing act to ensure there is enough suitable brush without over planting and thus over supplying the factory and the market for brushwood fencing.

If you are interested in growing brush, contact Tim Emmott for more information: 9621 2400.

Mallees go hi-tech in the Avon

by David McFall

Avon Catchment Council (ACC) funding for integrating Oil Mallees on farms within the Wickepin cell has provided an ideal opportunity to explore and demonstrate the practical use of GPS technology for advanced site planning to achieve integrated and complimentary tree and drainage designs.

The Walton's East Pingelly property was chosen as a key demonstration site as it had challenging 'problem' attributes such as waterlogging and encroaching salinity which was effecting paddock production levels. The heavy clay soil and flat aspect site was also very typical of broad acre Wheatbelt landscapes.

The ACC Mallee Tree Cropping Project is managed by a Steering Committee comprising Upper Great Southern Oil Mallee Grower members with assistance from Project Manager - David McFall. Year 2006 planting target was 200 'new' hectares of mallee revegetation within 80km of Wickepin townsite to support new industry development and multiple NRM outcomes.

Concept to creation:

- Project promotion and initial site inspection completed by Autumn 2006.
- Initial concept plans developed to integrate trees across the site in workable alleys. Final configuration was three row mallee belts and a 48 meter (2x24m boom) cropping zone completed by Autumn 2006.
- Tree belts were orientated in north south to aid stock inspection and mustering (access track runs east west on the southern fence line).
- Natural surface water flow to the north with existing deeper drainage structures removing major flows.
- Target revegetation was higher than normal sites (approx 12 to 15%) in order to maximise water use. 3 row belts preferred over 4 row on this site to reduce 'edge effect' (higher on clay soils).
- Plantings at 1500 stems hectare in the belts or 'distributed' planting density of 260 stems per hectare (number averaged over whole site - belts plus crop alleys).
- Tree belt was designed for a minimum 10m canopy spread to meet potential 'carbon sequestration' specifications and/or farm greenhouse compliance opportunities.
- 'Landlogic' mapped the paddock using DGPS technology. Tree lines were at parallel intervals suitable for precision and efficient agricultural workings.
- Site data was prepared and presented by 'Landlogic' on a base map depicting tree lines and topographical contours at 10cm intervals complete with surface flow indicators.
- Aim to construct (as required) broad shallow spoon drains to enable surface water relief while maintaining trafficable parallel alley workings. Tree orientation can potentially assist with water relief but as yet untested due to the 'dry' season experienced.
- Site ripped and weed controlled by the landowners in winter 2006. Inter-row cropped with barley.
- Site planted in August 2006 using a mixture of machine and hand operations.
- Ongoing site monitoring- weeds/survival to be conducted by summer 2006.
- Infill program (if required) planned for 2007 to achieve 85% plus survival.
- The dry winter has made for a challenging year.



The use of GPS is becoming a familiar data gathering 'tool' for farm operations-especially by service agents and contractors. As farm operators become more familiar with the technology and its practical applications then its adoption into farm systems will grow.

As an alternate pathway 'Structured' i.e. parallel groves of trees offer a 'visual' guidance opportunity for landholders to capture working efficiencies while providing multitudes of other NRM benefits such as controlling waterlogging and other erosion factors such as wind.

The Walton's mallee site will be an invaluable opportunity to demonstrate the ability to integrating revegetation and water works within a whole farm system using GPS technology as an advanced planning tool.

Strategic Tree Farming

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) are calling for Expressions of Interest from landholders keen to take up Strategic Tree Farming (STF) opportunities for next year's plantings. Targets in the Avon NRM Region for 2007 are 900 hectares of Australian sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) and 100 hectares of *Pinus pinaster*. If you would like to participate in - and benefit from - the Avon STF project, you will need to commit a minimum of 20 hectares of suitable land to the scheme. Target areas are those receiving 400mm or more annual rainfall.

FPC foresters will assess the land, and if it is suitable, will develop a management plan in consultation with you, the landowner, identifying the most appropriate "driver" and support species for the soil types and rainfall level.

If approved, an offer will be made for the use of the land. You can opt to take it an upfront lump sum, or as a regular annuity over the lifetime of the contract which may range from 25 to 40 years depending on the species to be planted. You will also receive a share of the profits of harvesting activities.

There are a number of options regarding the management of the tree-farming operation. You can hand the total management over to FPC, or you may be offered to take on certain operations - e.g. planting, pruning and spraying - yourself, which provides you with the opportunity to generate additional income from the project. This is a flexible option - you can handle those operations that fit comfortably with your main farming activities. FPC may call in on you when mutually convenient. Farmers carrying out operations receive training, advice, assistance and safety induction from qualified FPC personnel.

After your initial commitment of land, you can apply to expand the areas allocated to tree farming on a year-by-year basis.

Essentially, the project has been structured to make it easy and profitable for landholders to participate, in the format best suited to their individual circumstances.

For further information please call FPC's Tree Farming Information line on 1800 231 242 or your local officer at the Gnangara 9302 7488 FPC office.

Many farmers who committed to the STF project in its early days have allocated more land to tree farming each year and in some areas plantings are approaching the maximum permitted under Commonwealth and State Government funding.

Where the scope for new plantings is limited, it is FPC policy to give preference to those farmers already working within the project.



Make sure **all** your plantings are **documented** as carbon sinks

In Australia, a forest carbon sink must meet all of the following criteria to be recognised as Kyoto consistent:

- Comprise trees with a potential height of at least two metres and a crown cover of at least 20%;
- Cover an area greater than 0.2 hectares, and a minimum width of 10 metres;
- Have been established since 1 January 1990, on land that was clear of forest at 31 December 1989;
- Be established by direct human induced methods, such as planting, direct seeding, or the promotion of natural seed sources;

These criteria are consistent with those developed internationally under the Kyoto Protocol.

For more information:
www.greenhouse.gov.au

Avon Catchment Council support of tree crops

Avon Native Plant Industries Program - Increased tree cropping support for 2007

by Tim Emmott, Greening Australia (WA) ((08) 9621 2400/temmott@gawa.org.au)

Landowners and groups in the Avon River Basin will have access to increased support to develop tree cropping projects on their properties in winter 2007, thanks to funding provided through the Avon Catchment Council's Natural Resource Management Plan and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

Integrated tree cropping offers landowners the opportunity to obtain the land management benefits of strategically integrating trees into their farm (salinity control, erosion, shelter etc) whilst using a system that can provide a financial return through the sale of products from the trees in the future.

Devoting areas of the farm to tree crops is a way of managing agricultural risk, through diversification, maximising productivity and utilising summer and autumn rainfall. Strategically placed tree crops can act as future carbon sinks to offset on-farm emissions or offer opportunities to trade the carbon sequestered by the trees.

The Avon Native Plant Industries project aims to support landowners develop their own tree cropping projects, with the main focus on addressing salinity and water quality issues through revegetation of deep rooted perennials, as well as obtaining other land management outcomes and the development of critical mass required to sustain new industries.

Coordinated by Greening Australia (WA), the program involves a mixture of on-ground and developmental support. Tree cropping has been progressively developing in the wheatbelt over the past ten years, with several key species being focused on in this project. These include WA Sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*), Brushwood (*Melaleuca* spp), Swamp Sheoak (*Casuarina obesa*) and Oil Mallee (*Eucalypt* spp.)

Support and subsidies are available to landowners and groups wishing to develop tree cropping projects in 2007. For more information contact Tim Emmott on the numbers above.

Avon Region Salinity Tender: \$500,000 Invested in On-Ground Salinity Management

by Catherine von Pirch, Salinity Coordinator ((08) 9690 2250/cvonpirch@agric.wa.gov.au)

Due to strong community interest in integrated on-ground activities, the Avon Catchment Council (ACC) developed the Avon Region Salinity Tender. As a result, \$500,000 will be invested in on-ground salinity management, funding a total of 1,298 hectares of revegetation and enabling 43 farmers throughout the Avon River Basin to implement salinity management practices on their properties.

The Tender opened on the 10 July 2006 with a call for Expressions of Interest from groups and landholders. Following a preliminary desktop assessment, a site assessment of each proposed project took place providing landholders with the opportunity to discuss the salinity issues on their property with a qualified hydrogeologist.

Project submissions were of a very high standard with the most competitive awarded funds. Assessment of Tenders was based upon the value-for-money that the proposed project provided in terms of the \$/ha impacted. The results of this Tender appear to indicate that revegetation options provide a very cost effective solution to salinity management.

Activities to be funded through the current Tender include planting of approximately 550 hectares of Oil Mallees, 105 hectares of Tagasaste, 500 hectares of Lucerne, 430 hectares of mixed pastures (incl. Serradella, Biserrula), 8 hectares of native trees and understorey species, and 5 hectares of Sandalwood.

The Avon Region Salinity Tender has been funded by the State and Australian Governments through the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP). Round two of the Avon Region Salinity Tender will open in 2007 with a further opportunity for Avon Region landholders to implement integrated salinity management activities on their land.

2006 at a Glance

February 10 - **Carbon Information morning** held at Northam. Australian Greenhouse Office staff and local experts gave an update to 60 interested people.

There is currently a great deal of interest in carbon sequestration projects and it is a key aim of AVONGRO to keep abreast of developments and opportunities.

The Australian Greenhouse Office has an extensive range of extension materials available free of charge and on request. Visit their website to view the selection: www.greenhouse.gov.au

The morning was sponsored by NLP, GA, ACC and the AGO



Some of the 2006/07 AVONGRO committee members

March 30 - **Avon Sandalwood Network Field Day** at Beverley:

The day included talks, sharing of experiences, site visit and demonstrations.



A very keen audience of 84 people attended to hear and share the latest developments.

The day was sponsored by NLP, GA, and ACC

May - *Casuarina obesa* Working Group visit Greening Australia's impressive **provenance trial** between Northam and Goomalling.

Here the Avon's Native Plant Industries Project Officer measures growth rates and biomass volumes.



Winter - Following on from the Search Project, the Department of Environment and Conservation collected seed from all known provenances of *Atriplex nummularia* and *Acacia saligna*. These were carefully grown in nurseries and planted out under difficult winter conditions.



2006 at a Glance

September 26- **Avon Sandalwood Network Field Day** at Koorda

82 people travelled from far and wide to see several large-scale plantings.



The day was sponsored by GA and ACC

October 3 - Information morning and discussion on the feasibility of establishing a brushwood fence panel manufacturing facility in the Avon.

October 6 - Pine Processing Tour of Wesbeam and The Laminex Group factories.

October 10 - AVONGRO AGM with presentations on landscape specialisation and regional tree crop updates.

October 18 - Full day Forest Sink Workshop presented by the Australian Greenhouse Office.



October 26 - **Sawmilling demonstration**, Shire of Goomalling

Greening Australia coordinated a sawmilling demonstration of an 80 year old sugar gum on behalf of the Shire of Goomalling. The tree had been planted by Sofia Park in 1914 when she was a student at the Walyormourig School. Several farmers brought in other species for milling on the day.



October 27 - **Avon Sandalwood Network Agronomy Day** at Bolgart *(sponsored by GA and the ACC)*

October - AVONGRO Executive Officer attended the national Private Forestry Development Committee workshop in Tasmania, meeting with other Executive Officers to exchange experiences and discuss the future.

November 30 and December 1 - two full days with the Australian Greenhouse Office on the use of the Carbon Accounting Toolbox and Viewer.

December 6 and 7 - National BioEnergy Conference in Fremantle

'A sustainable commercial tree crops industry integrated with existing regional land use systems which enhances the social and environmental benefits for the Avon River Basin.'

Direct seeding trials



The Avon region is 11.8 million hectares in size, of which 8.4 million hectares is currently used for agriculture or conservation. To revegetate only ten percent of the cleared land to address salinity, water quality and erosion issues will mean there could be approximately 840,000 hectares of land in need of revegetation. At an average of 2,500 stems per hectare, this equates to over two trillion seedlings of a mix of biodiversity and commercial plantings or 52,500,000 seedlings a year over the next 40 years.

This scale and rate of revegetation is beyond the combined means of individuals, the Catchment Council, State, Federal and Local Government programs if planting with seedlings alone. AVONGRO has been very fortunate in that Lotterywest has awarded us \$28,500 over three years to trial direct seeding techniques and that Dr Geoff Woodall (Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management, Albany) has agreed to conduct this direct seeding research for us.

The Lotterywest funded trials will focus on pelletised oil mallee seeds compared to other methods of direct seeding. There will always be a need for significant numbers of seedlings, direct seeding is seen as a way to significantly scale up and supplement the rate of revegetation required in the Region.



new prototype direct seeding machine

Genetic Improvement of New Woody Crops Underway

by Dan Huxtable ((08) 9334 0186/ Daniel.Huxtable@dec.wa.gov.au)

The Florasearch Project has initiated a major breeding program for Old Man Saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*) and Golden Wreath Wattle (*Acacia saligna*). In winter 2006, family/provenance trials were established on farmland at Tammin, Bolgart and Tenterden. Replicate trials for Old Man Saltbush have also been planted at Murray Bridge (South Australia) and Condoblin (New South Wales).

The Florasearch Project is a joint project of the CRC for Plant-Based Management of Dryland Salinity, Department of Environment and Conservation and Joint Venture Agroforestry Program. The project aims to develop novel, woody crop plants for introduction into agricultural landscapes to improve landscape sustainability for production and conservation.

The trials include genetic material collected from across the natural distribution of each species. The focus of Old Man Saltbush breeding is to improve its utility as an in-situ pasture species. Golden Wreath Wattle is being developed as a short rotation biomass crop for woodchips, processed fodder and bio-energy.

Commercially grown varieties of crops, such as wheat and barley, are the culmination of thousands of years of breeding improvements. The Florasearch trials represent the first steps along a similar path for Old Man Saltbush and Golden Wreath Wattle. The outcome will be more productive perennial plant systems that will improve the cost effectiveness of salinity management.

Pistachios in WA

by Bert and Angie Hayes ((08) 9622 9513/www.wapistachios.com.au)

Prior to the 1980's, we had been planting a lot of trees for biodiversity on our farm but then decided to look for something that would bear fruit that was suitable for our climate. After quite a bit of research and a ten week night school course at Bentley TAFE, we decided to go with pistachio nut trees however we found it extremely difficult to get assistance from anyone with suitable knowledge.

We battled along germinating root stock seeds and bought some grafted trees from the Eastern States but could not get our root stock grafted so in 1994, we decided to travel to the Eastern States and learn as much as we could and decide whether to continue or to give it all away. On returning from that trip I field budded 200 root stock trees and had 180 successful takes so I got all enthusiastic again and decided to do a pistachio course in California in 1995 and we have continued to grow since then. We now have around 2,500 trees in our orchard although only about half of these are producing yet as we have expanded a bit each year with the last area of 600 trees planted in 2002.

In Eastern Australia probably about 95% of the pistachios that are grown are processed and sold through one facility. Pistachios must be processed (dehulled) or put into cold storage within 24 hours of harvest so we decided to build our own processing facility which is now complete, although we are still developing some machinery for certain applications such as de-shelling non-slip nuts. This harvest we expect to get 5 tonne of fresh nuts and we expect a harvest of close to 20 tonnes by 2012 although we lose approximately 50% weight after processing and drying the nuts. The nuts can be sold fresh (unprocessed) through Canning Vale markets provided they remain in cold storage or they can be dehulled, dried, roasted and salted which is the way we are doing it at present. We also do our own packaging and marketing, we sell mostly to IGA supermarkets and tourist related businesses in Country areas with our feature being "Local WA Grown". We have no trouble selling them with repeat orders coming in constantly and we haven't got to the Metro area yet. We pack the roasted, salted nuts into 260g plastic containers and wholesale them for \$25.00 per kilo equivalent. We also have developed a nursery selling grafted pistachio trees and provide assistance to anybody purchasing trees, such as orchard layout etc. Some basic conclusions that I have come to as a result of my experience are that, although pistachios are drought tolerant, they will not yield a commercial crop if neglected so I would suggest some basic minimum requirements for a commercial exercise.

1. Plant trees in a grid pattern as there are male and female trees to ensure efficient pollination.
2. Provide some water during summer period by drip irrigation or similar to assist with fruiting and tree growth.
3. Fertilize trees at least annually.
4. Prune trees at least every second year.
5. Provide some bird control e.g. Gas gun or similar.
6. Check that you are situated in the right climate area.
7. Plant grafted trees only unless you have extensive propagation experience.

Further information on purchasing trees or pistachio management in general, contact Bert and Angie.



Private Forestry Development Committees

AVONGRO Wheatbelt Tree Cropping Incorporated is your very own Private Forestry Development Committee (PFDC) for the Avon River Basin – all 11.8million hectares! PFDCs work to national policies and strategies. Key national outcomes for all PFDCs include:

- Greater engagement with primary producers and their industry representative bodies;
- Balancing industry development with natural resource management (NRM) outcomes;
- Engaging with regional NRM groups, contributing to the achievement of regional NRM resource condition targets (RCTs) through the development and marketing of tree planting options with multiple benefits to land holders and investors;
- Collaborative development of regional industry plans with a focus on investment and marketing opportunities, and areas for research and development; and
- Acting as information brokers between potential investors and landholders to facilitate development of business models supporting plantings integrated with existing land uses.

AVONGRO's goals and objectives have been adopted from the Avon's Tree Crop Strategy:

Goal 1: *Increase the awareness and adoption of tree crops as an integral part of regional landscape management which addresses natural resource management (NRM) issues across the Avon River Basin.*

Objectives:

- Provide consistent and relevant information to the community to achieve greater community awareness;
- Adoption and development of relevant industry accreditation and codes of practice (COP);
- Understanding and development of carbon sequestration opportunities;
- Establish an active farm forestry unit focused on the region, with greater grower and industry participation;
- Develop and support networks for grower extension;
- Encourage the development of commercially viable tree crops as a major component of landscape management and agricultural production; and
- Train/attract skilled tree crop operators/personnel in the region.

Goal 2: *Investigate, encourage and support diverse and vertically integrated tree crop industries of sufficient scale to achieve environmental, economical and social outcomes in all agricultural areas of the Avon.*

Objectives:

- Produce a base line inventory of the current extent of tree crops in the ARB;
- Support the development of new industries and processing facilities, adopting best practice, to provide triple bottom line benefits for the region;
- Encourage investment and interest in tree crops from R&D organisations and producers while exploring viable tree crops for the region; and
- Investigate the economic viability of tree crops and gain recognition of the critical mass required (growers, community, government) for markets and triple bottom line benefits.

Goal 3: *Develop and coordinate interaction between the community, all levels of government and the tree crop industry.*

Objectives:

- Develop good communication links with the Avon Catchment Council;
- Develop a unified and shared approach between stakeholders for tree crop development;
- Involve growers in tree crop development (R&D) and marketing;
- Facilitate regional tree crop development;
- Develop a coordinated regional marketing strategy;
- Support planning to ensure sufficient resource is established in appropriate areas to supply the Integrated Wood Processing Plant and other industries; and
- Assist to identify priority areas for tree crop development, particularly in line with NRM benefits.

Our major funders and supporters

All Private Forestry Development Committees are funded primarily by the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry through the Natural Heritage Trust with matching cash and in-kind support from a range of State Government agencies. In Western Australia the Forest Products Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Food contribute financially as well as in -kind.



AVONGRO Membership Form

ABN: 33 120 830 918

AVONGRO Wheatbelt Tree Cropping Incorporated, the Avon's Private Forestry Development Committee.

Private Forestry Development Committees (PFDCs) are a national network of committees, each bringing together the key players in their region and facilitating a coordinated approach to the integration of commercial tree crops into the landscape to compliment existing agricultural systems while providing natural resource management (NRM) benefits. A specific aim is to ensure that there is sufficient volume of resource in appropriate rotations to supply new industries based on tree crops, providing new employment opportunities and attracting investment to regional Australia. There are 21 PFDCs nationally and five in Western Australia, with AVONGRO working specifically in the Avon and to the Avon's unique conditions.

The roles of PFDCs include:

- Addressing planning, infrastructure and coordination issues related to tree crops;
- Undertaking feasibility studies into tree crop investment potential;
- Developing regional farm forestry strategies to encourage commercial tree crop-based industries in the region;
- Formulating related marketing, investment and wood flow plans;
- Facilitating communication between stakeholders; and
- Improving information flows on marketing and management of plantings.

So what does this mean for the Avon River Basin? The AVONGRO committee brings together representatives of the current key players in the low rainfall tree cropping industry, supportive community members, the Avon Catchment Council, Greening Australia and State government agencies to build a collaborative approach to tree cropping in the Avon region.

Membership to AVONGRO is open to anyone with an interest in tree cropping.

Membership fees (includes GST):

State Government	\$550
Commercial Industry (more than 5 employees)	\$275
National not-for-profit organisations and smaller businesses (less than 5 employees)	\$110
Volunteer groups (LCDCs, Conservation Groups...)	\$55
Farmers/growers/community members	\$20

Post this form with your payment to:
Monica Durcan, Executive Officer
56 Broadway Road
BICKLEY WA 6076

Yes please, I/we would like to join AVONGRO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State/Post code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Payment of \$ _____ is enclosed

Upcoming Events, 2007

Register your interest in upcoming courses

Introduction to Farm Forestry Course: March 14, 15, 16

A component of the Australian Master Tree Grower program, this 3 day intensive course focuses on tree cropping and farm forestry in the Avon – Wheatbelt region. The course involves a mixture of presentations from researchers, industry and farmers, and includes farm visits and tours of marketing and processing facilities. Tailored for wheatbelt conditions, this course is especially valuable for natural resource management professionals that provide advice or work with land managers and catchment scale NRM projects. No charge to attend the course, however only 20 positions available. Will be held in March 2007.

Introduction to Australian Sandalwood Production: April 19 and 20

A short course (2.5 days) designed to provide an overview of the Australian Sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) plantation industry, covering aspects of economics, planning, site selection, establishment, management, harvesting, products and marketing. Designed for landowners and NRM professionals. No charge to attend the course. Maximum of 20 positions. Will be held in early April 2007. This course is being run in partnership with Geoff Woodall from the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management.

To register your interest in the above programs, or for more information contact Tim Emmott on (08) 9621 2400 or temmott@gawa.org.au. Sponsored by the Avon Catchment Council / Greening Australia Native Plant Industries Project.

Other planned events

Farm Forestry Toolbox Training, March

Andy Warner will conduct a workshop in the Avon on the use of the Farm Forestry Toolbox with specific applications appropriate to our region.

Cooperatives and Business Models

Postponed from 2006 it is still planned to bring Andrew Lang of SMARTtimbers to WA to, along with local experts, hold a forum on the types of systems that have worked and failed around the world so that grower groups in the Avon can develop a system to suit their special needs.

Contact: Monica Durcan (08) 9291 8249/mdurcan@iinet.net.au.

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