

Wednesday 11 April 2007
Attention Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Breeding for wood quality in Australian plantations Australasian Forest Genetics Conference commences today

How to breed Australian plantation species for high quality wood and paper products – and help keep Australia and New Zealand competitive - is a research challenge being discussed at the first Australasian Forest Genetics Conference, commencing today.

“Plantation-grown wood is a different type of resource compared to wood from native forests. The science of tree breeding develops improved varieties - for example faster-growing, straighter trees with higher density wood, that will improve plantation profitability,” says one of the conference organisers Dr Chris Harwood, a program manager in the CRC for Forestry.

The conference brings together molecular biologists, geneticists, breeders, propagation specialists, managers and professional foresters to exchange the latest information and technologies and strengthen collaboration.

Close to 100 Australian and international tree breeders are attending, representing each of the national and state research agencies, and private companies. The scientists will report upon and discuss advances in breeding plantation species such as eucalypts and pines.

Amongst the world-leading researchers attending is Ensis scientist Dr Robert Evans, the 2001 winner of the Wallenberg prize (forestry’s equivalent of the Nobel Prize).

This is the first ever Australian conference with the theme “breeding for wood quality”. Conference Chair Dr Harry Wu says that Ensis (formerly CSIRO Forestry) pioneered breeding for improved wood quality in radiata pine, and many of the papers presented at the conference report on progress with this species.

What: The inaugural Australasian Forest Genetics Conference
Where: The Old Woolstore, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia
When: 11-14 April 2007
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For more background information on Dr Robert Evans, please see
<http://www.csiro.au/files/mediarelease/mr2001/PrWallenberg2.htm>

The conference is being held in conjunction with meetings of the Australasian Forestry Research Working Group 1 (Genetics) (RWG1 17th Meeting) and the IUFRO Southern pines working group (2.02.20).