CLIMA CLIMB

WA’s research and training sector has reached new heights, with the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) recently landing a record $5.9 million in new funding, including $1.7 million to start new projects in 2002/03.

New research projects will genetically examine fungal disease resistance and quality in pulse crops, expand WA’s pasture germplasm bank and strengthen national and international linkages for strategic research.

“Explosive growth in Australia’s $700 million pulse industry was fuelled by generous prices, ready markets and environmental rewards, but that has been slowed by the emergence of diseases which we must control to recapture that momentum,” CLIMA Director, Kadambot Siddique said.

“Aside from the positive role they play in cereal rotations, legume crops and pastures produced and promoted by CLIMA must deliver profits in their own right.”

Industry confidence in CLIMA’s ability to deliver has seen growers fund 12 new research projects in 2002 through the peak national grains research investment body, the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC).

This complements eight new projects supported by various other funding bodies and fittingly brings down the curtain on Professor Siddique’s inaugural year as CLIMA Director.

He was appointed Director as CLIMA launched itself as an independent research centre, encompassing collaborators the WA Department of Agriculture, University of WA, Murdoch University and CSIRO, following the conclusion of its Commonwealth funded CRC phase.

“CLIMA’s success in securing so many projects illustrates the strength and collaboration of its four core partners and associates and reflects the funding bodies’ confidence in CLIMA’s research and development capacity,” Professor Siddique said.

The $1.7 million for new projects, which begin this year and continue for the next three to four years, tops up an existing $4 million budget and will be supplemented by investment attracted from subsequent funding submissions.
Although the GRDC remains CLIMA’s primary supporter, new funding also comes from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, the Grains Research Committee of WA and the increasingly active WA-based Council of Grain Grower Organisations.

“CLIMA is in a nationwide race to secure as much of Australia’s finite research budget as possible in the area of legume science,” Professor Siddique said.

“Those funds attract first class talent to our universities and other partner organisations, furnish our laboratories with world class technologies and offer expert training in an innovative environment to industrious WA students, including 20 post-graduates, plus numerous researchers.

“This will result in faster development of products and technologies to meet the demands of legume growers, industry and consumers.”

ENDS

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