INDUSTRY INVITED TO ‘DRIVE TO THE FUTURE’

Driving WA’s lupin crop closer to its 1.6 million hectare potential could help capture developing stock feed markets, including aquaculture and high value human consumption markets such as lupin milk and flour.

Speaking at a recent meeting of the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) Industry Advisory Group (IAG), Grain Pool of WA Chairman and Wongan Hills farmer, Robert Sewell revealed that local marketers were exploring both areas.

“Lupin content in fish feed could moderate the expense of fish meal, which represents almost one third of fish farm input costs, so aquaculturists would support new lupin alternatives,” he said.

Mr Sewell also noted that human consumption markets such as fine lupin flour, fibre and milk were strengthening, especially in Europe, where apprehension surrounding genetically modified soy bean produce was cultivating interest in lupin milk.

With lupins accounting for 82 per cent of WA pulse exports, new marketing opportunities appealed.

Meeting the complex specifications of new and existing markets, while suiting local farming systems and delivering profitable yields, was the challenge for local breeders and agronomists.

The IAG, chaired by Trevor Flugge and comprising 19 industry representatives, including those from CLIMA’s core partners, Department of Agriculture (Dr Graeme Robertson), CSIRO (Mick Poole), Murdoch University (Professor Mike Jones) and University of WA (Professor Hans Lambers), would therefore profile WA pulse crops to identify new paradigms for each and better focus local research efforts.

UWA-based CLIMA Director, Kadambot Siddique said breeding to meet market demands must never compromise the agronomic traits of pulse crops.

“Pulse rotations must continue to help limit herbicide resistance in weeds and control disease and nematode populations in cereals, while satisfying their own end markets.
“We therefore must identify all major drivers for lupins and other pulses for the next five to 10 years.

“For this, we will interact with all industry sectors to open and maintain a register of demands on specific pulse crops and develop a wish list of aims for applied research and breeding,” Professor Siddique said.

While lupins were WA’s most common pulse, the IAG wanted robust chickpea and field pea alternatives for heavier soils in the grain belt.

The cost-price squeeze also ensured yield increments remained on the agenda, with input cost sensitive monogastric stockfeed markets, such as pigs and poultry, demanding low cost grain, produced in bulk.

Professor Siddique said that although the register would consolidate existing industry and market intelligence from CLIMA’s diverse IAG group, it would be dynamic, with all industry stakeholders encouraged to contribute.

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