



## CLIMA Media Release

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### **JOINT VENTURE WORKS FOR WA CHICKPEA GROWERS**

A joint venture to breed new desi chickpea varieties for WA conditions capped a successful year for the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA).

Backed by funding from venture partner the Council of Grain Grower Organisations (COGGO) with pre-breeding being done in India at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the project will develop breeding lines using innovative techniques and germplasm from CLIMA, Department of Agriculture (DAWA) and ICRISAT.

Over five years it should release at least one variety to help WA's desi chickpea industry grow from 5000 hectares to 50,000 ha.

After returning from India where he co-signed the agreement with COGGO CEO Geoff Smith, CLIMA Director, Kadambot Siddique emphasised yield, quality and ascochyta blight resistance as the key breeding objectives.

“Others include early flowering, chilling tolerance, lodging resistance, greater plant height, botrytis grey mould and Fusarium wilt resistance and tolerance to nematodes.”

Meanwhile, new large seeded kabuli chickpea varieties, with resistance to ascochyta, are already being bred by CLIMA with COGGO support.

Three advanced lines underwent seed increase this year by COGGO members, in advance of the likely February 2005 release of one or more lines, with seed available to growers for 2006 production. COGGO members will have priority access to seed.

In September at Dongara, Agriculture Minister Kim Chance launched two new desi chickpea varieties, Sonali and Rupali, for WA's northern and central wheatbelt.

Developed by CLIMA and DAWA, with Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) support, they have potential for low rainfall areas in SA, Victoria and NSW.

“Chickpeas are an excellent option for the 70 per cent of WA growers using rotational cropping systems,” Professor Siddique said.

Based on potential national chickpea plantings of 400,000 hectares at \$400/ha, ascochyta resistant chickpeas could sustain a \$160 million Australian industry.

In an earlier boost to WA's chickpea industry, Mr Chance launched the new premium quality, extra large kabuli chickpea, Kimberley Large, in August.

Previously based on a single variety, Macarena, the Ord River irrigation area chickpea industry was already worth about \$2.5 million, but now had the potential to increase to \$6 million a year.

A 1998 to 2002 project, funded by DAWA, CLIMA and the GRDC, developed Kimberley Large, with germplasm from the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas in Syria.

Professor Siddique said Ord River growers had already commented positively about the quality (large seed size) and yield of Kimberley Large following the 2004 harvest, with one reporting yield and seed size being up about 10 per cent over Macarena.

**ENDS**

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Professor Kadambot Siddique, Tel 08 6488 7012, Mobile 0411 155 396

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**Image:** Looking at chickpea seedlings in the disease selection room at ICRISAT, India are (L to R) COGGO CEO Geoff Smith, CLIMA Director Professor Kadambot Siddique and Dr Pooran Gaur, ICRISAT Senior Chickpea breeder and Project Leader.