



Kim Chance MLC

Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry; the Midwest and Wheatbelt

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New pasture legume varieties for WA

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Agriculture and Food Minister Kim Chance today released two new pasture legumes, expected to boost pasture production in Western Australia.

Speaking at the Department of Agriculture and Food's Sheep Updates conference, Mr Chance said seed of both new varieties should be readily available to farmers in 2008. Limited quantities of seed could be available in 2007.

The Minister said the sulla cultivar Flamenco was an erect, early flowering sulla for high quality fodder production. The purple clover cultivar Electra was a highly productive deep-rooted annual fodder legume.

Mr Chance said emphasis during the development work was on improving the cost-efficiency of seed production in the two species.

Both new varieties had their origins in the Mediterranean. They were developed in six years of trials under a project supported by the Department of Agriculture and Food, the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC).

The Minister said an exclusive licence had been awarded to a WA/South Australian consortium for the seed production of Flamenco, while three licences had been awarded for the seed production of Electra, one in WA and two in NSW.

He said legumes were particularly significant for both WA's livestock and cropping systems.

"Reducing the cost of pasture seed is important to improve returns to farmers," Mr Chance said.

"Both these varieties are targeted to high rainfall regions and have dual grazing and forage conservation benefits."

Flamenco, a short-lived perennial legume, was selected from a sulla accession collected in Tunisia.

The Minister said it offered a new option in between regenerating annual legumes and longer-term lucerne pastures.

Electra was selected from a purple clover accession collected in Turkey.

"Purple clover has long been recognised in Australia as a highly productive annual forage legume," Mr Chance said.

"The high quality and productivity of Electra, particularly late in the growing season, makes it well suited to fodder production systems."

The Minister said the project to develop the two new pasture cultivars involved a considerable team effort, combining researchers and high calibre technical support.

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