



CLIMA Media Release

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THREE PHASE POWER TO SPARK CLIMA

Collaboration, innovation and legume performance remain the focus of Phase Three of the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) as it continues to provide WA graingrowers with sustainable and profitable outcomes.

Centred at UWA from July 1, CLIMA continues to collaborate with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA), CSIRO and Murdoch University, plus its international partners, to maintain the flow of new germplasm into WA farming systems.

As his June 30 retirement approaches, CLIMA Director, Professor Neil Turner said the future of CLIMA rested in germplasm enhancement for breeders, training of postgraduate students and further linkages with international projects.

“Maintaining strong links with other Australian and overseas legume research groups creates opportunities to explore new germplasm technology that can improve yields and returns for WA growers,” he said.

Professor Turner recently represented CLIMA in China to create better linkages with scientists working in dryland agricultural research to help develop profitable grain and pasture legumes for both China and Australia.

At the recent UWA ‘CLIMA: Past, Present & Future’ Forum, he said CLIMA’s strengths included developing core germplasm collections, interspecific chickpea and lupin hybridisation and doubled haploid chickpea and field pea development.

“All CLIMA partners are involved in developing a core collection of around 10,000 subterranean clovers to retain the diversity of genes for future selection and breeding,” he said.

“Chickpea interspecific hybridisation includes investigating chilling tolerance at pod set and in-vitro embryo rescue and for lupins it includes developing greater pearl or mutabilis lupin adaptation using new genes from South American species.

“Breeders will also benefit from faster breeding and greater variation due to doubled haploid development in chickpeas and field peas,” Professor Turner said.

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Other promising projects include examining the benefits of early vigour in lupins, understanding the genetics of salinity tolerance, maintaining genebanks and increasing capacity building through East Timor's Seeds of Life research.

UWA's Dr Heather Clarke and Dr Kioumars Ghamkhar, DAFWA's Dr Phil Nichols, CSIRO's Dr Jens Berger and Murdoch's Professor Richard Oliver also presented at the forum.

UWA's selection panel is in the process of appointing a new CLIMA Director.

Professor Turner, who spent more than 30 years with CSIRO, has been involved with CLIMA since its inception, becoming its Director in August 2006.

"I've enjoyed my time with CLIMA and I welcome the appointment of a new Director who can provide fresh ideas and take CLIMA in new directions," he said.

Professor Turner looks forward to spending several months in the Kimberleys with his wife, Dr Jennifer Turner, immediately after his retirement.

Image: CLIMA Board Chairman, Professor Alistar Robertson, Australian Centre for Necrotrophic Fungal Pathogens Director and GRDC Western Panel member, Professor Richard Oliver of Murdoch University and CLIMA Researcher, Dr Janine Croser at the 'CLIMA: Past, Present and Future' forum at UWA.

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