



CLIMATE CHANGE GRANT **TO WA BIOTECH COMPANY**

NemGenix Pty Ltd., Western Australia's only genetically modified (GM) crop trait development company, has been awarded a \$386,000 grant by the Australian Government's Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research under its 'Climate Ready' funding program, which supports innovative solutions to climate change challenges.

NemGenix is one of only four grant recipients from WA in this fourth funding round and the only one nationwide to receive support to work on crop improvements.

NemGenix won its funding to work on drought tolerance in biofuel crops, with a focus on developing a GM crop trait that can be incorporated in sugarcane to provide resistance to plant parasitic nematodes. These small, thread-like organisms devastate root systems, dramatically limiting water and nutrient uptake and annually cause \$167billion losses globally across all crop species.

Sugarcane, the world's leading biofuel crop, is the focus of the NemGenix work, as it is highly susceptible to plant parasitic nematodes, with yield reductions of up to 20% recorded in Australia. Sugarcane also has particularly high water requirements, consuming as much as all of the world's fruit and vegetable crops (WHO, 2005).

Commenting on the work, NemGenix Chief Scientific Officer, Professor Mike Jones, said that despite the enormous losses caused by plant parasitic nematodes, very little has been done to develop nematode resistant crops. Instead, agriculture has relied on control by highly toxic pesticides, or otherwise has just tolerated the losses.

“A healthy root system is essential for effective water and nutrient uptake. Without it the effects of reduced rainfall conditions associated with climate change will be far more severe,” Professor Jones said.

The NemGenix work uses state-of-the-art molecular technologies to tackle a devastating root pathogen in a way that can be applied to many other biofuel and food crops.

Commenting on the grant, NemGenix Chief Executive Officer, Dr Sean Hird, said the grant follows the NemGenix success last July with securing a major research and development contract with Dow AgroSciences and caps off a great year for the company.

“This last funding round under ‘Climate Ready’ had more applications than any previous round. This success reflects the growing recognition of our capabilities and the emergence of NemGenix as a leading Australian biotechnology company,” Dr Hird said.

www.nemgenix.com

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