

MEDIA RELEASE

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Attention: News Editor

Native foods gather momentum

Potential growers and consumers gained an insight into the future of boutique produce in the Great Southern at a Native Food Field Day at Beaufort River on 11 October.

Part of a project to develop new root vegetable industries, the field day set out to increase awareness of opportunities for the cultivation of Ravensthorpe radish (*Platysace deflexa*) and native potato within the Great Southern.

The Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) has provided \$30,000 of funding to the three-year development project in a partnership with the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and South Coast Natural Resource Management.

Led by 2010 GSDC Medal winner Dr Geoff Woodall, a part-time research fellow at UWA's Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management, the field day allowed participants to view best practice cultivation, gain agronomy information and participate in useful discussion.

Native radish has a sweet, mild flavour. It can be eaten raw, baked or fried and is an ideal salad ingredient.

Dr Woodall said that about 20 people attended the field day and it generated interest from several growers looking to trial commercial crops of the vegetable.

"Interest from potential growers is a big boost for the project and brings us a step closer to establishing a new industry within the Great Southern," Dr Woodall said.



Dr Geoff Woodall (centre with hat) leads a field day on the potential for native food crops.

“With native foods becoming a high demand niche market, the Great Southern could become a market leader and provide enterprise opportunities to Indigenous and non-Indigenous operators in the future.

“Landholders in inland parts of the Great Southern with an interest in horticulture, a spare patch of sandplain soil and small supply of fresh water will be able to access free plant material in 2013,” Dr Woodall said.

GSDC Chairperson Peter Rundle said he was pleased with the promising outcomes of the work to date.

“The Great Southern community has a strong affinity with locally grown produce,” Mr Rundle said.

“Potential new industries surrounding native foods could provide growers with opportunities to supply the local market, with a view to eventually wholesaling the produce beyond the Great Southern.”

The field day also focused on the potential for sandalwood nuts as a human food and various innovations using sandalwood by-products.

The development project will run until 2014.

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