

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Attention: News Editor

### **Great Southern expertise boosts north**

Agricultural technology from the Great Southern will help to establish the viability of fodder cropping in the Pilbara, building on the benefits of a GSDC Medal grant.

Woodanilling farmer Russel Thomson is helping to pioneer hay production pastures irrigated by iron ore mine dewatering operations in the Pilbara.

Mr Thomson won the 2008 Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) Medal for Excellence in NRM for his pioneering work in landscape drainage.

He used the \$10,000 grant from the award to purchase specialised equipment for trials of raised bed seeding in the Great Southern.

The same equipment will now be used in the Pilbara by Mr Thomson's business to establish large-scale trials of fodder crops including Rhodes grass, an African perennial that can grow over two metres high.

Mr Thomson said the project was about the environmentally sound use of excess water from mining operations.

"Irrigated pastures can make hay all year round and the mines produce huge quantities of good quality water that is currently unused," Mr Thomson said.

"The specialised seeder we used for trials in the Great Southern has a wavy disc coulter, closer plate and press wheel, which should help to get a good germination rate from the Rhodes grass."

The pasture will be planted on a station run by Rio Tinto, which has 25,000 head of cattle over six pastoral leases.

Hay harvested from the operation will be used for the company's own cattle and any excess will be sold to other pastoralists in the Pilbara and Kimberley.

Gaining extra fodder will enable the property managers to confine the herd to a smaller area, enabling new plantings of trees and other vegetation for carbon credits.

GSDC Board Chairperson Peter Rundle said it was good to see the benefits of the GSDC Medal extend beyond the boundaries of the Great Southern.



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“The Medal was established to encourage excellence in natural resource management and it has supported a variety of projects in the region,” Mr Rundle said.

“This development takes an advance supported by the GSDC Medal and directs it to improving resource management in the north of Western Australia.

“Growing crops with excess water is better use of resources than discharging it into the environment,” Mr Rundle said.

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