



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **the Premier and Cabinet**

Minister for Agriculture and Food

Media Statement

25/8/09

Landmark new strategy to help farmers prepare for drought.

Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman today launched a landmark new strategy to help farmers in the North Eastern Agricultural Region (NEAR) respond to drought and changes in climate.

Speaking at the Mullewa Field Day, Mr Redman said the State Government has committed an initial \$1.75million for the NEAR Strategy, resulting in more resilient family farm businesses.

“Farm profits really are at the mercy of the weather and the response to date from governments on drought has been reactive, instead of focusing on preparation,” he said.

“The ideas behind this strategy originated in the community after several consecutive dry seasons. Farmers realised they needed access to more relevant information on weather conditions, more training and more knowledge about their local environment to be able to make decisions that will see them prepared for the tough times.

“In response the Department of Agriculture and Food, in consultation with the community and others including those from the environmental, farming, agribusiness and local government sectors, developed the NEAR strategy.”

There are a number of projects to be implemented under the strategy to help farmers respond effectively to variable seasonal conditions.

“One of these involves a network of sites within the region from which localised weather data will be collected and interpreted to help farmers make informed decisions about crops and stock,” the Minister said.

“Another project involves self-assessment tools and training to help manage seasonal variability and improve farm business management skills. There will also be a project to assist farmers to change their land use on poor soils and optimise good soils.

“The NEAR project will also be examining opportunities to share labour between mining and farming activities in the area and ways in which farmers can earn alternative income when the season will not deliver a profit. This could include leasing farm equipment like bulldozers and tractors to local government and mining projects.

“The beauty of the NEAR project is that the data gathered from these projects in the Mid-West will be applied to farms in other low rainfall areas of the State.

“The NEAR Strategy is about managing change and providing farmers with greater certainty about their future. In doing so, they will be able to make every hectare count - no matter what the season delivers.”

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