

Securing a Fodder Bank

Planning to cope in dry seasons is a skill being learnt first hand at the W.A. College of Agriculture Morawa. Staff and students hope that by planting a fodder bank which is able to survive through drought, there will be a reduction in soil erosion and an increased supply of fodder for stock. 4,500 mixed variety salt bush seedlings are being planted on a low productivity area of the College farm.

The majority of the seedlings are Rhagodia. This is a native salt bush which grows throughout Western Australia on a variety of soil types. It grows to 2.5m and is palatable to both cattle and sheep. Rhagodia can stabilize soil to prevent wind erosion and water run off as well as adding biodiversity to the landscape.

Students have been involved with the preparation of the site which was ripped and mounded. “The mounding has reduced the number of weeds so there will be less competition for the newly planted seedlings”, explained student Jack Boyd. “We will be watering the young plants as we plant them but then they will not require watering again. With a bit of luck a couple of good rains in September and October will help give the plants a deep watering and a good start. The forecast from the weather bureau is reasonably promising”, he concluded.

Staff and students are also keeping a close watch on the carbon credit scheme and are optimistic that the College may become active in carbon trading as a future source of income. Student, Critishia Buckland believes that the plantings of Rhagodia may have a role in carbon trading. “It was interesting to hear about the first soil carbon readings that were taken at Binu this month”, she said. “We have been following the carbon issue but until now we have not heard of any actual measuring being done. With this first step, we might eventually be able to trade carbon with industry. On a farm like this one there are some real possibilities for earning income as well as doubling up to provide fodder for stock”.



Critishia Buckland and Jack Boyd planting Rhagodia

The College is registered to deliver Nationally Recognised Certificates in Agriculture, Automotive and Construction. Students successfully completing the course will have an advantage when applying for an apprenticeship, further studies at Tafe or moving directly into the work force. Each week students spend one day on farm participating in seasonal activities, one day in the automotive/construction workshops and three days in class. Classroom subjects are vocationally based and include Plant and Animal Production/Marketing and Small Business Management. Other opportunities offered at the W.A. College of Agriculture Morawa include the Pastoral Industries course and Football Programme.

Make a booking for the free try-out week today. Limited places are available for 2008. Ring 99711158 for more information or visit the website on www.morawaag.wa.edu.au

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