

Saline Ground Water - Problem to Profit

Students at the W.A. College of Agriculture Morawa are investigating the options of using saline ground water for supplementing farm incomes. Aquaculture, seaweed and salt production are three possible opportunities for using the water that is now available in the recently excavated deep drain on the College farm.

As part of their Small Business Management studies students will have the opportunity to critically evaluate the potential of salt water products for complimenting inland farming enterprises. Traditionally, students produce a product on which to run a small business project for 10 weeks. Products vary from homemade paper and soaps to a fat lamb feedlot. The value-adding of saline ground water will add a very topical option to the Small Business projects.

Feasibility, marketing, management, business plans and budgeting are all covered during the course. Many graduate students are able to call on this knowledge in their working lives when they may eventually manage their own business in Primary, Automotive or the Construction industries.

Mathew McKinley from Moora is particularly interested in the opportunities from saline ground water as deep drains have been excavated through water logged paddocks on his family farm. "We were experiencing reduced yield due to the rising water table", he said. "The 3m deep drains have released a huge amount of water and it would be good to value-add or develop a new enterprise from the water resource, to add to the farm income. It seems such a waste to see the water pumped away into the natural water course. It will be interesting to investigate some ways of using the water through our small business projects", he concluded.

Fish farming is another option being investigated by Troy West from Badgingarra. Troy's family has an established fish farm, using water from a wetland to grow Silver Perch and Goldfish. "We tried marron and barramundi initially without much success, he explained, but conditions seem to suit Silver Perch the best. It surprised us to find that there is a good demand for the goldfish from pet shops", he added. "It could be an interesting exercise to try to grow other varieties of fish suitable for the domestic pet market, in water from the drain, although licensing could be difficult".



Students will be participating in the up coming Water Symposium, which is to be hosted by the College, where a variety of options for using saline ground water will be discussed. All interested community members are invited to attend the symposium on June 29th. Guest speakers will cover topics including aquaculture and seaweed.

For more information about the Water Symposium or courses offered by the College, please phone 99711158 or visit the website www.morawaag.wa.edu.au.

Prospective students are invited to come for a free try out week.

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