



Video- Money in the Mallee

**A report for the RIRDC/Land & Water
Australia/FWPRDC
Joint Venture Agroforestry Program**

by Tym Duncanson and Keith Parnell

(Video available on request from RIRDC –
phone 02 6272 3736)

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Introduction

The objective of this project is to provide authoritative video material (on request from the Agroforestry Sub-Program area – 02 6272 3736) to farmers and the community on all aspects of the developing mallee industry. The broad-scale establishment and adoption of oil mallees into agricultural regions of Western Australia has the potential to diversify farm income, help ameliorate land degradation such as dry land salinity and provide employment and value adding opportunities in rural and regional Western Australia. These benefits could be as a result of commercial investment by the private sector rather than relying solely on government support and financing.

The project aimed to include information and images of establishment, maintenance, commercial use and the environmental benefits of oil mallees. The intention was to gain maximum exposure through wide dispersal but with specific targets of reaching 100 rural advisers and 1500 farmers.

The project commenced in August 1999. All the planning and supervision of the project was undertaken by the Oil Mallee Association. The purpose of this report is to formally present the results of the project and to briefly outline the process undertaken. The resultant video is contained in a CD-ROM attached to this report. Viewing the video is the best summary of outcomes of this study.

Studies such as Enecon Pty Ltd (1999), also supported by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, have shown the commercial potential, environmental benefits and public good of establishing an industry based on the production of mallee biomass from cleared agricultural land and integrated processing in rural towns. The challenge for the industry is to convey this potential to farmers and other landowners to attract them to the industry prior to the full scale commercial processing of oil mallee biomass. This “chicken and egg” conundrum, where industry cannot invest in processing until a substantial resource is growing, and growers will not plant until commercial viability is clearly established, is a major impediment to the development of the new generation of perennial crops required to alleviate salinity. The only way to overcome this conundrum is to find investment, motivation and practical application of ideas by forward thinking growers and landowners. Communicating the potential benefits of the industry is a major component of overcoming the conundrum.

The methodology used in this study was as follows::

- Conduct a survey to provide additional data on perceptions on the mallee industry to locate examples of ‘best practice’ that might provide positive images;
- Identify individuals who could articulate the methods and aspirations of mallee crop management and processing.
- Retain competent video directors and film crew, prepare and refine appropriate commentary and to undertake the editing and reworking of the material to produce the final product.

Background

Research

The oil mallee industry is very young. The industry development imperatives have been all related to short term commercial survival, albeit within a very ambitious context of improving the sustainability of agriculture. The industry has generated a substantial body of literature but at this stage little of this is in the area of scientific literature. In particular, there is little literature specifically addressing adoption of oil mallees by Western Australian wheatbelt farmers.

To meet the obligation to have some sound background data on adoption the following procedure was followed:

- Conduct a communications audit (completed August 1999).

- Workshop with farmers (conducted Sept 1999)
- Public relations survey conducted by the Curtin University Business School (completed Nov 1999)

This material was used to prepare a media and communications strategy. The results of this process were qualitatively assessed. The results can be summarised as follows:

- There was a moderate understanding among farmers of the potential for the oil mallee industry;
- There was a only a modest adoption rate of planting oil mallee due to the following reasons
 1. Farmers were unsure of the commercial benefits of oil mallees;
 2. Farmers were not impressed by existing plantings of oil mallees;
 3. Farmers were not familiar with the industries that oil mallee produce can be sold into;
 4. Farm funds were difficult to obtain for new and high risk industries;
- Incentives such as a contribution to the costs of establishing planting areas, the provision of expertise to assist the landowner and land rentals were keys to a rapid uptake of oil mallee planting amongst landowners.

Video Design and Production

With the information obtained through workshops and consultation a communication consultant was employed to effectively and efficiently address the most important information needs using the power of vision. The issues addressed were as follows:

1. Wherever possible show vision of successfully established oil mallee plantings and emphasise self management of plantings by farmers;
2. Demonstrate developments related to harvester technology and the ability to use up to date technology to maximise production and reduce costs.
3. Demonstrate research into eucalyptus oil and its use in pharmaceutical, essential oil, solvents and as a replacement for fossil fuels;
4. Explain the potential for additional products such as carbon credits, renewable energy credits, aiding in addressing salinity and other potential realisable benefits to the landowner.

The twelve minute video which resulted is contained on a CD-ROM included in this report. Readers should note that contact and other details included on the CR-ROM are already outdated and should not be distributed for promotional purposes.

The original study proposal intended to distribute 100 videos to potential investors and key advisors in the agricultural sector. 1500 videos were expected to be sold to farmers. Over 100 CD-ROMs were distributed to a network of farm advisors, agricultural consultants and investment houses and were part of a package to attract funds to the industry in the form of an Offer and Information Statement produced by the Oil Mallee Company of Australia Ltd. This venture capital raising proposal did not succeed but the distribution of the CD-ROM's was an effective way of increasing knowledge of the industry and its potential to key advisory and money markets.

The sale of 1500 videos to farmers was not progressed as indications showed that farmers, as with other consumers, did not expect to pay for promotional material. However the distribution of CD-ROMs and showing of videos, wherever possible, during appropriate gatherings had a similar impact to a large number of farmers and stakeholders.

Conclusion

The study was a success in that information was gathered and applied in a promotional video replicated in VHS format and on CD-ROMs. The Oil Mallee Association funded the majority of the

costs but the grant from the JVAP made the project possible. The video was professionally produced, covered the major issues identified in the research component of the study and is easily updateable as details change in the future. The video has become a major component of the industry communication. Understanding of the potential for oil mallees, uptake of mallee planting and development of the industry have accelerated since the project was commenced.

Reference

Enecon Pty Ltd (1999) Integrated Tree Processing of Mallee Eucalypts; Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

Plain English Compendium Summary

Project Title:	Value added culinary herbs
RIRDC Project No.:	OIL-2A
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Objectives	Research the most effective way to encourage farmers to adopt oil mallee planting. Produce a promotion/information video for farmers to stimulate oil mallee planting as an aid to salinity control. Distribute 100 copies of the video to rural advisors and sell 1500 copies to farmers.
Background	An earlier RIRDC project OIL-3A showed the commercial potential of oil mallee industry establishment. It was identified that communicating the potential effectively was a key component to future development.
Research	The key issues preventing uptake of the industry was determined through informal farmer, other landowner and advisor forums. This was applied using a communication consultant to the development of an effective video for distribution.
Outcomes	A twelve minute video was produced and replicated in VHS format and on CD-ROMs containing other industry information. The CD-ROM's were made available to a number of investors and advisors. The VHS version has been shown regularly to farmer information forums.