

Media Release – 28th May 2020

NZ Dryland Forests Initiative secures \$539,000 One Billion Trees Partnership funds to scale up plant production

The NZ Dryland Forests Initiative (NZDFI) is pleased to confirm that it has been awarded a grant of \$539,000 from Te Uru Rākau's One Billion Trees Partnership Fund.

The funding will go towards work to accelerate the availability of elite, ground durable hardwood producing *Eucalyptus* planting stock, with the focus on two species, *Eucalyptus bosistoana* and *E. globoides*.

The NZDFI began work almost 11 years ago and has invested in a region- wide tree breeding and research programme. The improved plants will be available to landowners wishing to plant durable eucalypts from 2021 onwards.

Durable eucalypt hardwood timbers do not require chemical treatment. The timbers have a range of potential applications – for example posts and poles for orchards (kiwifruit, vines and hops) and for organic farms, cross arms for powerlines, furniture, outdoor timber (e.g. high-end decking) and flooring. Also the logs can be peeled to produce high strength veneer for manufacturing laminated veneer lumber (LVL) for large scale wooden buildings. Currently in New Zealand the timber used in many applications is either chemically treated pine or imported hardwood, much of which is from SE Asian and South American rainforests. The NZDFI's vision is to develop a sustainable New Zealand durable hardwood industry by 2050.

The NZDFI is administered by the Marlborough Research Centre Trust (MRCT) at their Blenheim campus. MRCT Chief Executive, Gerald Hope is delighted with the funding announcement.

"This 1BT funding is another exciting step forward for the NZDFI, which has been building the foundations of a hardwood industry based on genetically improved durable eucalypts for over ten years.

"We know that there is increasing local and global demand for high-stiffness, naturally durable timbers that are not chemically treated - nowhere more so than here in Marlborough, where the long-term disposal of broken CCA-treated posts is an environmental challenge for the wine industry and our local council. And now given the likely long term economic impact from the pandemic, the timing of this funding will provide a new area of growth for the forestry sector and offer new jobs in the years ahead"

Proseed NZ Ltd, a Ngāi Tahu subsidiary and NZDFI partner, is based in Amberley, North Canterbury and is New Zealand's leading producer of tree seed. The company will now be able to further develop and scale up its novel clonal propagation programme and commence the collection of seed from its clonal seed orchards.

"This funding is a huge boost for us," says Proseed's CEO, Shaf van Ballekom. "We have already invested significantly in skills and facilities to support the NZDFI's breeding programme and now we will be able to start to deliver the benefits of our eucalyptus breeding work. It's very exciting."

The 1BT funding will be matched by industry contributions and also the sale of improved nursery stock. NZDFI project manager, Paul Millen, who developed the NZDFI's 1BT funding proposal for Te Uru Rākau to consider, is looking forward to seeing the start of the supply of genetically improved seedlings, particularly to those landowners that have been waiting for these to be available.

"The plants will be launched under the 'Xylogene' brand ensuring that their genetics and quality are known, and the programme is recognised," says Paul. "All the plants are the product of breeding and selection work undertaken by the NZDFI since its inception in 2008. Growers will be able to plant genetically improved durable eucalypts for the first time ever in New Zealand."

Marco Lausberg, manager of the SWP, says: *"Funding from the 1BT fund is recognition that New Zealand needs species diversification as part of managing risk. This grant for the naturally durable eucalypt programme will help ensure the long-term sustainability of commercial forestry through realising value from emerging species and developing new models for forestry."*

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Images



NZDFI tree breeder Ruth McConnochie, and Proseed propagation specialist Maree Cresswell inspect improved *Eucalyptus* stock at Proseed's new propagation facility in Amberley, North Canterbury.



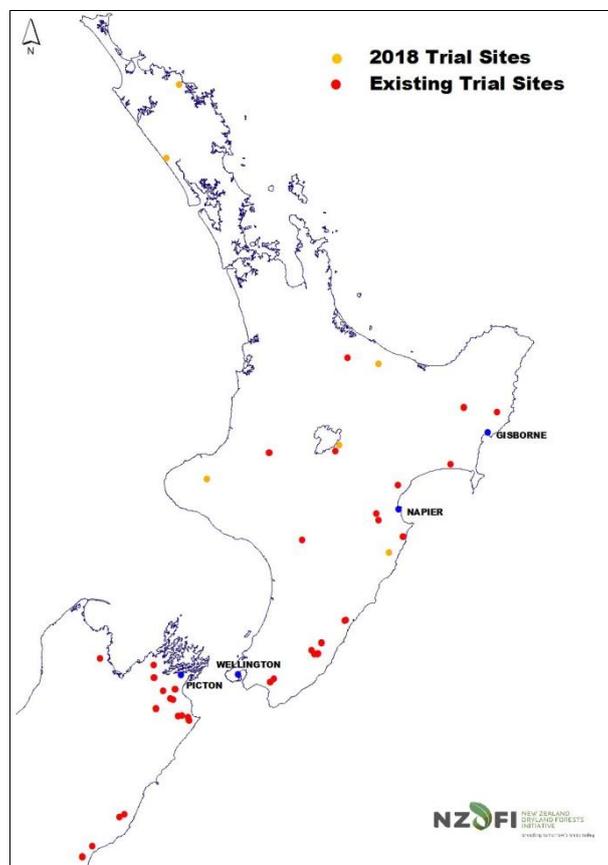
A recent field day at a NZDFI trial site on the Dillon property, Marlborough. Marlborough's drylands are typical of the eastern regional land suited to durable eucalypts, with low annual rainfall and predicted increasingly severe summer droughts.

More images available from Paul Millen.

Notes for media

NZDFI has a network of over 30 breeding and demonstration trials on farmland throughout its target regions (see fig below). The two species which are the focus of this 1BT-funded work – *Eucalyptus bosistoana* and *E. globoidea*, were identified early on as showing excellent potential across a range of sites, and have been the NZDFI’s focus of intensive selection and breeding work to date.

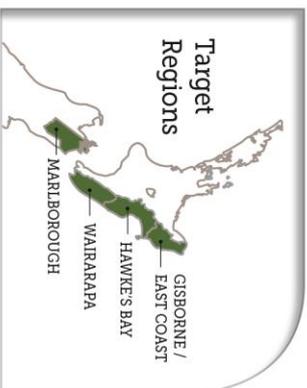
The new funding will assist the NZDFI and its partner, Proseed NZ Ltd, to produce 300,000 elite plants comprising 100,000 *E. bosistoana* seedlings, 100,000 *E. bosistoana* clones and 100,000 *E. globoidea* seedlings. These seedlings and clones will be taken from the most elite families/trees identified from existing NZDFI trial sites in New Zealand.



More information about the NZDFI:

Visit www.nzdfi.org.nz for full details of the NZDFI’s activities. More information about our selected species can be found in the [‘For Growers’](#) section.

The NZDFI has recently completed a 10-year strategic plan: [Durable Eucalypts: A Multi-Regional Opportunity for New Zealand’s Drylands](#). Our overall vision is captured in the graphic below:



DURABLE EUCALYPTS: A Multi-Regional Opportunity For New Zealand's Drylands

OUR AIM:

To build sustainable regional industries based on high-value, fast-growing hardwood forests

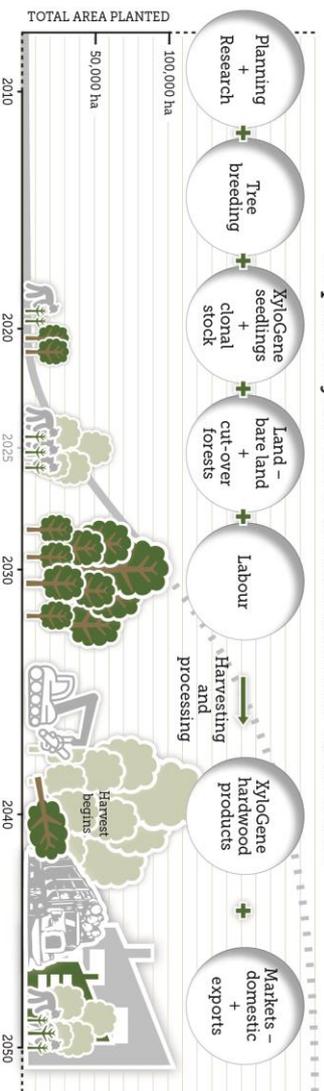
WE WILL SUPPLY:

Genetically improved XG seedlings and clonal plants that thrive in dry conditions

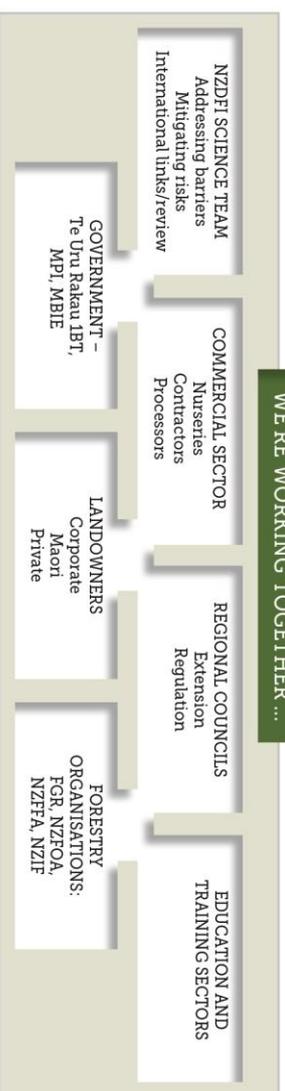
TO PRODUCE:

Certified timber that is naturally durable, strong, and richly coloured for laminated veneer lumber, decking and posts

We plan a XyloGene branded hardwood value chain



WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER ...



THE BENEFITS:

- Diversify land use in dry regions
- Generate regional jobs and skills
- Produce high-value products
- Produce an alternative to CCA-treated pine
- Combat climate change by storing carbon
- Protect soil by coppicing
- Provide pollen and nectar for bees and birds

FOCUS AREAS

1. Identifying markets for durable hardwood
2. Modelling forest productivity and economic feasibility
3. Working regionally to encourage new forests
4. NZDEI's durable eucalypt forestry research plan
5. Educating growers on durable hardwood forest management
6. Industry partnerships to build support and capability

