NZDFI NEW ZEALAND DRYLAND FORESTS INNOVATION
Breeding durable hardwood | Whakatipu taikākā mauroa

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## Media release – February 20th 2023

# NZ Dryland Forests Innovation wins funds to evaluate the potential regional benefits of planting durable eucalypt forests to increase the sustainability of Marlborough's wine industry

The Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Damien O'Conner recently announced that the NZ Dryland Forests Initiative (NZDFI) has been successful in an application for $262,300 from the Ministry of Primary Industry's Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change fund (SLMACC).

This is a significant contribution to the total project cost of $387,500 with the balance of $10,000 from the Marlborough Research Centre Trust and a further $115,500 of in-kind co-funding from the University of Canterbury's School of Forestry and the four local landowners who are supporting the project.

The project, which began late in 2022, will evaluate how new investment in naturally durable eucalypt hardwood forests could contribute to sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Marlborough's wine industry.

Gerald Hope is Chief Executive of the Marlborough Research Centre Trust, one of NZDFI's founding partners and comments:

> *"Marlborough's wine industry is already highly focused on sustainability and this project will further leverage the benefits that planting durable eucalypt forests could have for our region. I want to acknowledge the interest and support for NZDFI from the many landowners involved across Marlborough's forestry, farming and viticultural sectors. This project will highlight how regional science and industry collaboration can develop an innovative and sustainable new land use, in this case growing naturally durable hardwood forests to provide a local product that will improve the sustainability of our wine industry."*

NZDFI started in 2008 as a collaborative public/private tree breeding and research programme for eucalypt species that produce naturally durable timber. NZDFI partners are Marlborough Research Centre, University of Canterbury School of Forestry (SoF), and Proseed NZ (NZ's leading tree seed producer, owned by Ngāi Tahu). NZDFI's inception was motivated by the demand in Marlborough for naturally durable hardwood alternative to CCA-treated vineyard posts.

The University of Canterbury School of Forestry 's Professor Euan Mason is leading the core research element of the new SLMACC project. Prof Mason is supported by Dr Vega Xu, a geo-spatial technology expert, who is evaluating the potential of new drone-based LiDAR to measure total tree biomass. Associate Professor Clemens Altaner, the lead wood scientist in the School of Forestry's Wood Technology Centre, is overseeing work to dry and assess biomass of the 99 trees that have been destructively sampled by a UC student team working in Marlborough over the summer period.

The students and staff worked with local contractors who felled the trees in six local NZDFI trials over the summer break, supported by the farm/forestry/vineyard landowners on whose properties the trials are located. The large amount of data collected during this field work will provide the basis

for property-based case studies to analyse the potential for durable eucalypts to deliver multiple benefits:

i. carbon sequestration to offset landowner's greenhouse gas emissions
ii. producing durable posts and poles for the local vineyard industry
iii. producing biomass for bioenergy, thereby providing a source of renewable energy.

The case studies will analyse the landowners' GHG emissions and compare these with carbon sequestration by their stands of *E. bosistoana* and *E. globoidea.* They will inform the landowners of the extent to which their agriculture businesses are net-negative, net-neutral or net-positive in GHG emissions.

Bioenergy New Zealand Executive Officer Brian Cox will lead the bioenergy investigation for the project, including assessing Marlborough's wine industry and other local industry energy needs and where biomass can most efficiently provide an alternative to existing energy sources.

NZDFI General Manager Paul Millen supported Prof. Mason over the summer to provide technical guidance to the five undergraduates who received summer scholarships to undertake much of the field work in the trials.

> *"We are really pleased to have been awarded this SLMACC funding. Marlborough is the home of the NZDFI: we have worked here and in other regions on breeding and researching eucalypts to improve the naturally durable hardwood they produce. This project is another step towards establishing regional forests which will improve the sustainability of Marlborough's wine industry in multiple ways."*

Next steps include developing new models of tree growth utilising field data, and working with the four landowners to evaluate how durable eucalypts could contribute to their economic and environmental objectives. The project will largely be completed by the end of 2023.

**New Zealand Dryland Forests Initiative changes name to New Zealand Dryland Forests Innovation**

From February 2023, the New Zealand Dryland Forests Initiative will be re-named New Zealand Dryland Forests Innovation. This change acknowledges that the project initiative has been successful and now a commercialisation strategy for improved trees is being implemented to ensure research and development can continue.

This includes the set-up of XyloGene/NZDFIP Ltd to operate as a separate commercial company selling improved XyloGene nursery stock while NZDFI's ongoing tree breeding research and development will continue under the administration and management of the Marlborough Research Centre Trust.

See our new structure below.

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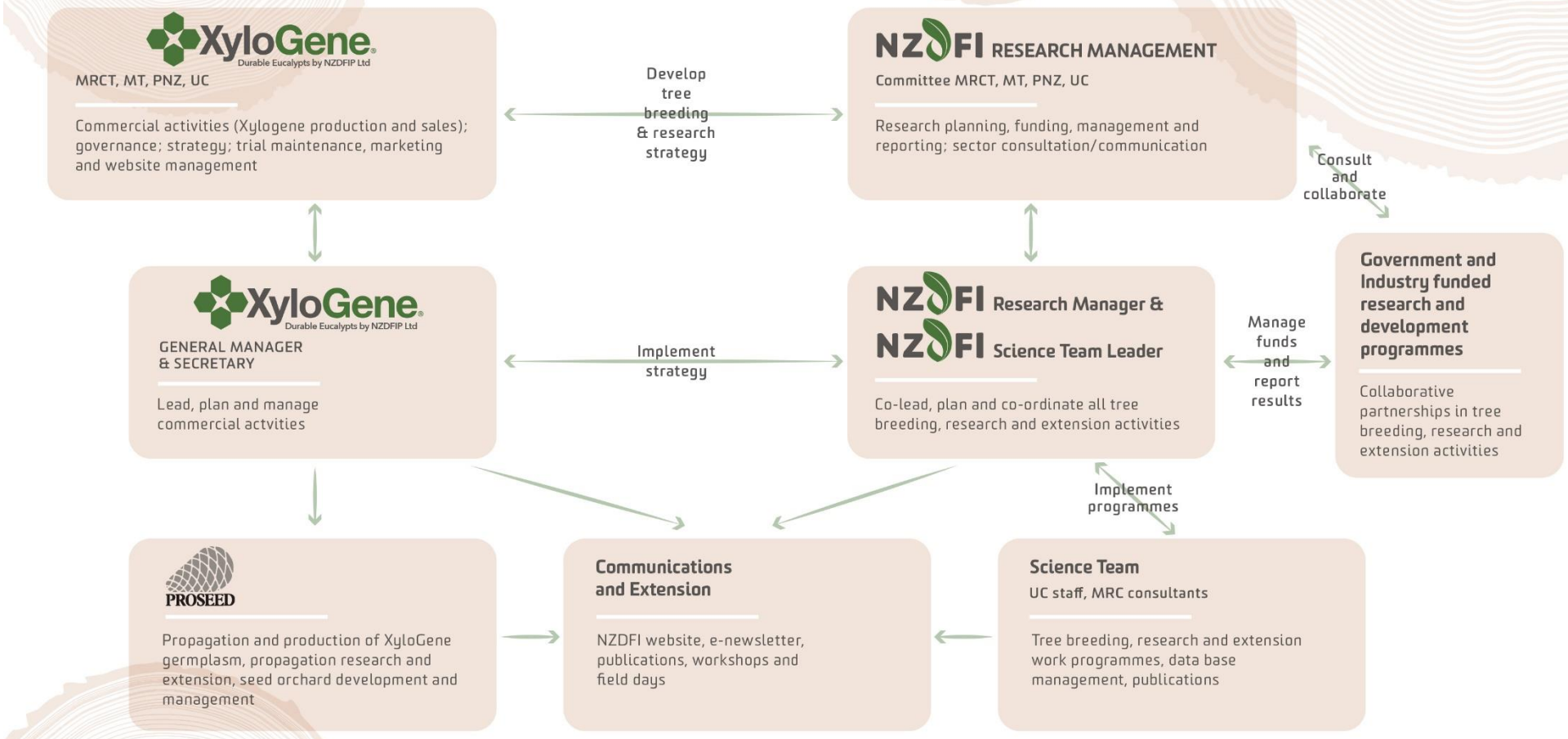
# STRUCTURE 2023 ONWARDS

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