

New DNA technology translates to 'real dollars' for plantation owners

AN industry 'game changer' is how the Southern Tree Breeding Association has described the use of DNA technology in identifying the physical attributes of trees at the seedling stage.

This technology has significant potential in assisting seedling selection for planting, speeding up growth and boosting log yield.

The 'break through' results of the world-first FWPA-funded research project focused on genetics technology to improve ROI for foresters, which Southern Tree Breeding Association general manager Dr Tony McRae recently presented to Australian scientists and forestry industry



Dr Tony McRae... translates into real dollars for plantation owners.

representatives at an event in Mount Gambier.

The significant advances in softwood and hardwood tree breeding research are thought to have the potential to help revolutionise the country's forestry industry, translating into real dollars for plantation owners.

"We are now growing trees faster, with smaller branches,

straighter and with better wood properties," Dr McRae said.

He described how the researchers have been able to "combine the DNA information on individual trees and families with physical characteristics data on a commercial scale breeding program".

"We can now make more

gains by using those pieces of information – a 'first' for trees internationally," Dr McRae said. "They have been doing it in the lab in universities, but they have not done it on a commercial operations scale," Dr McRae said.

Initially developed for use with hardwood, the hope among scientists is the technology will be equally as successful when used with radiata pine.

Dr McRae also used the opportunity to discuss other new technologies with industry members, including resistograph, a high-tech drill with the ability to test timber stiffness in standing trees.

(Border Watch)

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