

Resuming leucaena planting after recent rain falls across Central and Southern Queensland

The recent rain falls across Central and Southern Queensland after the tenth driest September in history has many graziers resuming their long term plans for extensive leucaena plantings to secure their future grazing capabilities.

However the rain has not provided the only boost to the leucaena industry, with recent concerns regarding the efficacy of the leucaena inoculum CB3126 to fix nitrogen being resolved.

The initial concerns were raised by The Leucaena Network, the industry's peak grower body, after it was identified through annual testing of the inoculum by the Australian Inoculants Research Group (AIRG) that the CB3126 strain was not performing typically and not producing effective, nitrogen fixing nodules on leucaena seedlings.

Members of the Leucaena Network and other growers, were relieved to hear that the AIRG has now sourced a new strain of the CB3126 inoculant from the freeze-dried collection at the Centre for Rhizobium Studies at Murdoch University.

Craig Antonio, Chair of the Leucaena Network believes the new strain will allay fears for the industry.

"The Rhizobium inoculant is an essential component of growing productive stands of leucaena. The native rhizobium bacteria that is usually present in the soil is unlikely to fix the nitrogen for which leucaena is known, so inoculation with the rhizobium is necessary," he said.

"The treatment of the seed with the CB3126 inoculant guarantees nitrogen fixation which has the dual benefit of assisting plant growth and returning much of that nitrogen to the soil."

Mr Antonio concedes that the concerns regarding the original inoculum will have some effect on the industry.

"We have growers, and potential growers ready to plant almost immediately and this issues will cause some delays in inoculant availability.

"The AIRG have advised us that they are currently undertaking extensive testing procedures to ensure that this strain of CB3126 is both effective and infective."

The AIRG has issued a statement indicating that the inoculant is unlikely to be available prior to Christmas 2017.

"As a leucaena grower myself, I can understand any frustration with not being able to get new stands planted after this rain, however I do believe the long term benefit

of having a strain that is guaranteed to be effective is worth the short term inconvenience.

“The Leucaena Network is closely following the testing process and will be posting updates on the website at www.leucaena.net to ensure growers are advised immediately the inoculant becomes available.

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For further information contact **The Leucaena Network Chair Craig Antonio on 0427 954 208**