Rice trial harvests early success

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The Country Liberals Government is undertaking research with the Territory’s only commercial rice grower, to determine the viability of a rice industry in the Northern Territory.

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Willem Westra van Holthe said the successful harvest of the trial crop could unlock the secrets to a new and profitable agricultural industry.

“The Northern Territory Government is committed to driving new development opportunities across the primary industry sector; that’s what we’re investing in this research looking at the possibilities for cultivation of high value fragrant rice varieties,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.

“Rice prices have almost doubled in the past year, from $290 - $450 per tonne for non-fragrant varieties. Fragrant lines have had a steady price of around $650 per tonne; it would be fantastic to get Territory farmers capitalising on that growth.

“Our research block has been growing commercial lines from Sun Rice and selected fragrant rice varieties which develop their characteristic aromatic flavours under tropical conditions.

“The fragrant lines we are growing include Doongara, Pandan Wangi 7, Jefferson, Azucena, Yunlu, Dangal, Kyeema and Viet 8, and crosses between these varieties.

“Initial results suggest the 100 day short develop line were affected by early cold in May but the 150 day crop is yielding well above expectations,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.

Researchers believe there are several promising varieties including Kyeema, Viet 8 and a Jefferson x Azucena Cross in this year’s screening trials; now the rice is harvested it will go into quality testing to look at the aromatics.

Minister Westra van Holthe said researchers have also been looking into a rice variety that is tolerant to ‘Rice Blast’, a naturally occurring fungus.

“In 2014 and 2015 we started growing aromatic varieties that are suited to growing in the Northern Territory climate and are tolerant of the ‘Rice Blast’ fungus,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.

“Early indicators look good; the Northern Territory Government is committed to ongoing research to ensure Territory
farmers have new opportunities to expand into the future.”

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