



North Queensland Register
(Townsville)

Thursday 12/08/2010

Page: 44
Section: General News
Region: Townsville QLD, AU
Circulation: 3972
Type: Rural
Size: 128.99 sq.cms.

AgInvest Forum showcases north

By Peter Mellor

IN September, Cairns will host the AgInvest Forum 2010, a Queensland Government initiative designed to showcase the region's agribusiness industries to potential investors.

Agribusiness industries have underpinned the far northern economy for more than a century. Traditional industries such as sugarcane, beef, fishing, bananas, timber and dairy are intertwined with the area's history – providing jobs and keeping smaller communities alive.

The region's natural resources and infrastructure – plentiful water, good volcanic and coastal soils, and transport links to markets with expanding populations – give agribusiness the materials to inspire and innovate. The region is also home to great scientific minds, who are applying their research to develop innovative new commodities and production techniques.

The missing link to realise new innovation is investment capital – the money needed to turn good ideas into a multi-million business.

This is the bridge that the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, through AgInvest 2010, is building to link investors with entrepreneurs.

Northern Queensland agribusiness generates in

excess of \$3 billion in farm gate value and is growing at five percent per annum.

The AgInvest 2010 program demonstrates why agribusiness continues to be a major driver of the northern economy, encompassing traditional industries as well as new enterprises.

Some of the opportunities that will be profiled at the forum include:

- Cass Tech – an enterprise developing a cassava processing plant to produce food starch for energy production.
- North Queensland Bio-energy – seeking to develop the region's first integrated sugar mill producing traditional sugar and a range of bio-based products.
- Papyrus Australia – 300 times stronger than normal paper, this 100pc banana fibre is water resistant and biodegradable.

Other opportunities waiting for investment include:

- Commercial production of aquaculture species including slipper lobster, groper and coral trout.
- Agave, a plant that can be used as a biofuel, for the building and polymer industries, and as a glucan-based carbohydrate in food.

● The AgInvest Forum 2010 will be held at the Cairns Convention Centre, September 7-9. For further information contact DEEDI on 13 25 23 or email aginvest2010@deedi.qld.gov.au