

Banana plan to bear fruit

Tania Bawden

AN IDEA born seven years ago in Adelaide is about to sprout the first commercial banana paper processing plant in Australia.

Papyrus Australia this week launched a \$4 million float to finance \$2.7 million worth of manufacturing facilities in North Queensland.

According to managing director Ramy Azer, banana paper technology had come into its own with the current market price for standard paper at \$1000 a tonne.

The technology uses banana plant fibre, which currently goes to waste, to make raw paper which is economically competitive with existing paper-making methods.

It also has the environmental advantages said Mr Azer, an engineer and Adelaide businessman.

"We expect the capital and production costs will be significantly lower than those of conventional pulped paper factories as a result of the low cost of banana waste and a vastly different manufacturing process," Mr Azer said.

The company's revenue target within the first two years is \$20 million. It has not given a profit projection.

The company estimates the Tully and Innisfail area of Queensland has enough banana packing sheds to support nine Papyrus Australia production lines, for revenues around \$180 million a year.

The offer of 20 million 20¢ shares, floating about 40 per cent of the company, closes on February 25 with a stock exchange listing expected on March 15.



Yellow fever: Ramy Azer turns bananas into paper.