

Investing in Australian lavender

AUSTRALIA'S emerging lavender industry is set to grow thanks to a partnership between AgriFutures Australia and La Trobe University's Institute for Agriculture and Food (LIAF) that will identify the best conditions and farming methods for the fragrant purple flower.

The research project will result in a knowledge based industry from growing to extraction to help farmers and industry throughout Australia optimise lavender production.

Lead investigator and LIAF Research Director Professor Jim Whelan said the work could position Australia as a world-leader in lavender oil exports and support diversification in the farming industry.

"Lavender is highly sought after for marketing opportunities from ornamental flowers, to oil production for use in cosmetics; aromatherapy and culinary applications, as well as agritourism," Jim said.

"This project will equip farmers with the tools and knowledge to grow consistent, sustainable and high-quality lavender."

La Trobe agronomist Dr Marisa Collins said, "Lavender is super tough and highly tolerant of poor soils, drought, frosts and wind, but to tap lavender's full potential, we will provide growers with tailored crop nutrition strategies that are backed by science."

The project is funded as part of the AgriFutures Emerging Industries Program which has its sights set on supporting the emergence of rural industries that can reach or exceed \$10 million revenue by 2022.

High growth potential

AgriFutures Australia Senior Manager, Emerging Industries Tom McCue said, "Lavender is a high growth potential industry and partnering with LIAF to improve agronomic principles, increase grower numbers and crop production will help the industry progress towards the \$10 million gross value production goal."

"Boosting grower confidence in the future of the industry is at the core of this work, and we look forward to achieving this through a combination of scientific expertise and dedicated



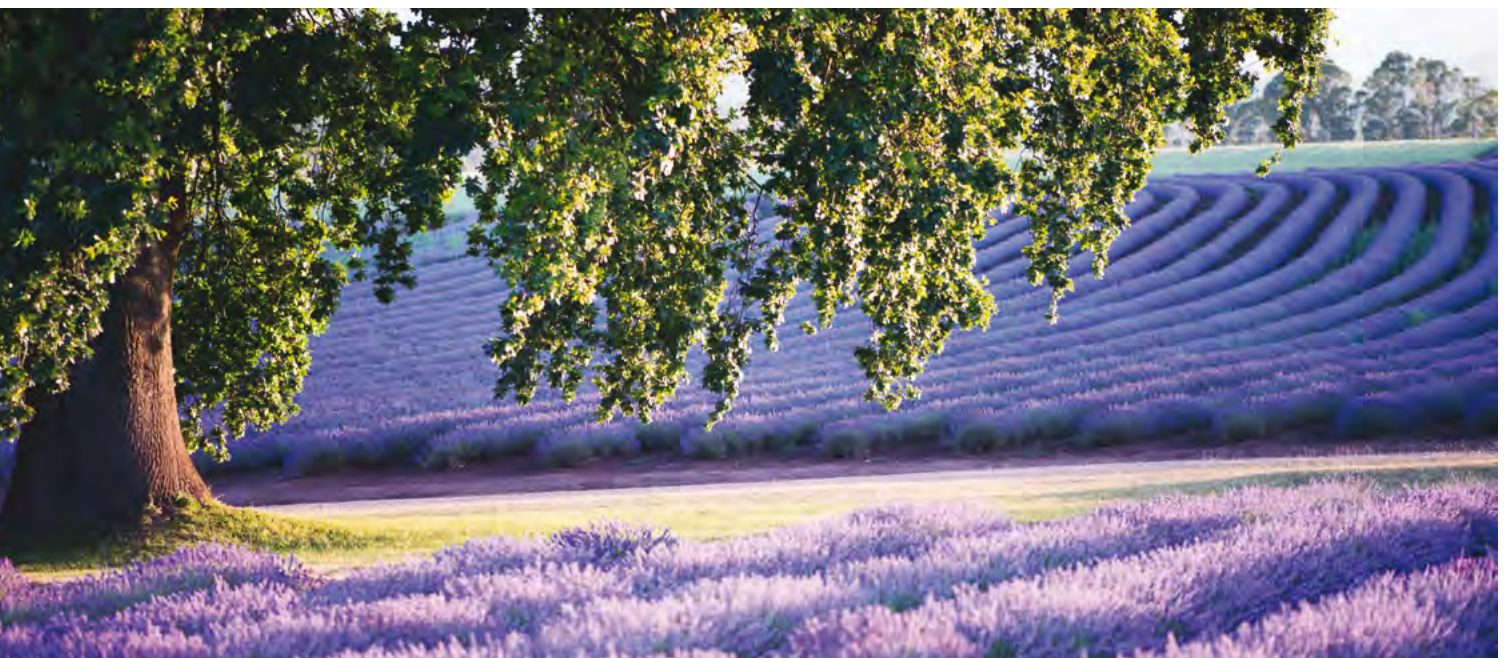
Lavandula angustifolia – common name Riverina Eunice.

(PHOTO: Clive Larkman)

industry research, coupled with a development and extension (RD&E) plan," said Tom.

LIAF experts in soil science, plant mineral nutrition, chemical analysis, field trials and data collection, curation and analyses will map the performance of different lavender varieties and farming practices to optimise growth and production. They will also assess soil characteristics and fertiliser regimes, and develop future breeding strategies to optimise lavender quality and yield.

The project is in partnership with lavender producer Larkman Nurseries; essential oil distiller and exporter Golden Grove Naturals; The Australian Lavender Industry Association (TALGA) and phenotyping technology company Scientific Instruments Australia – the Australian arm of global phenotyping company Photon Systems Instruments. ■



Bridestowe Lavender Farm in northern Tasmania.