



# Alternative fodder shrub for low rainfall areas: Rhagodia

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Right: Rhagodia in the northern agricultural region.  
Source: Saltland Pastures Association Inc  
Newsletter Issue 17, June 2007.

The opportunity for farmers in marginal areas to include perennials in their production systems is brightening, with new plant species belonging to the genus *Rhagodia* being trialled for their suitability as alternative perennial fodder shrubs in the lower rainfall agricultural regions of WA.

The persistence of perennials in many WA agricultural regions is constrained by low rainfall and poor soils, with viable options being limited. However the inclusion of perennials in farming systems has several benefits:

- it reduces supplementary feeding during the summer/autumn feed gap
- allows deferred grazing of break-of-season pastures
- provides options for tackling salinity, wind erosion and biodiversity.

In some instances (as seen in the Enrich project) inclusion of 10-20% farm area of perennial forage shrubs on a typical central wheatbelt farm can increase total farm profit by 15-20%.

*Rhagodia* spp. are native perennials to WA, commonly found in salt-affected areas, and due to their tolerance

of salt are collectively called saltbushes. *Rhagodia* species offer high value green feed during the summer-autumn feed gap, and have demonstrated high resilience to drought.

In some instances *Rhagodia* (*R. drummondii*) has been seen to contain 23% crude protein, and it also met animal requirements for phosphorus and copper, and exceeded dietary requirements for calcium, magnesium, sulphur and zinc. In general, *rhagodia* demonstrated high biomass production and good regrowth following grazing. Variation in palatability has been observed between different species.

So where can *rhagodia* potentially fit into your farming system? As a salt-tolerant shrub, *Rhagodia* spp. can be included in fodder shrub mixes for salt-affected areas, or alternatively planted in rows between annual pasture to provide year-round green fodder for livestock, manage salinity and combat wind erosion.

**For more information on *Rhagodia* contact Dean Revell [dean.revell@csiro.au](mailto:dean.revell@csiro.au) or visit [www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au](http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au)**



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This project is supported by Wheatbelt NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.