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Lupin fish fodder

TAKE a barramundi, add water and some lupins and you have a uniquely Australian flavour, one that could provide the kick lupins need.

Chairman of ASX-listed aquaculture company Cell Aquaculture Robert Sewell believes lupins "need another kick along" and that the world's rapidly growing aquaculture markets can provide that boot.

He sees lupins as the "quite achiever of a sustainable wheat industry" but wants to see a value-added product.

"My passion has been to find something for lupins - to get lupins in the right place," he said.

"There is no doubt that if we have to meet the demand for fish - and they are not going to come from the wild - they have to be fed and WA is in the ideal position to produce the product."

Research by Department of Fisheries program manager Brett Glencross has found lupins have functional characteristics such as binding strength and durability which set them apart from soybean as an ingredient in fish pellets.

Dr Glencross said feed companies were willing to pay premiums for some of these func-

tional lupin properties.

It is these characteristics that Mr Sewell is keen to push and see more lupins incorporated into aquaculture feed.

And he believes there are opportunities for Australian companies to develop aquaculture feeds from lupin kernels.

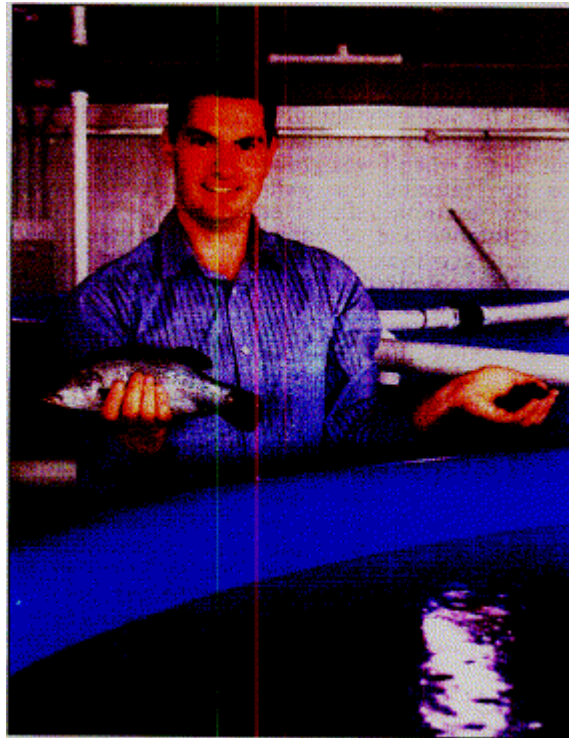
Now the first hurdle, a lupin processing plant, is finally about to come on line.

"I constantly think about the opportunities that should be there for lupins, and aquaculture is the obvious market because we are already producing food for fish in Taiwan, Thailand and China," he said "And with the Asian bird flu there's less demand for feed, so we're competing with soybean meal from the US and Brazil, and we've got to get lupin prices up for farmers in WA."

Mr Sewell said the lupin dehulling plant, due for completion in September, was the first step in taking the lupin further.

"The lupin plant has been my dream; it's the first stage (for the lupin) to go into other products," he said.

The company Mr Sewell is chair of, Cell Aquaculture is a WA-based company, which



Dale Harris, Australasian sales manager for Cell Aquaculture, based at Fremantle, with Barramundi being grown out in the grow-out tanks.

has recently formed joint ventures in the Netherlands and the US to establish aquaculture facilities each capable of producing 50 tonnes of barra a year.

The land-based facility houses a series of modular climate-controlled tanks which recirculates the water to grow the fish out.

The first batch of barra fingerlings arrived in the Netherlands in March, after being flown from a hatchery in Queensland.

"They just love Australian barramundi," Mr Sewell said of the international markets, but there are plans to add other species down the track.