


# Biomass engineers look to trees for renewable fuel

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has announced \$2 million funding support to develop a solution for collecting renewable biomass from fast-growing trees. ARENA chief executive officer Ivor Frischknecht said Biosystems Engineering would be developing, building and testing an innovative woody biomass harvester. "Fast-growing trees have the potential to offer an attractive renewable feedstock if a cost-effective harvesting method were developed," Mr Frischknecht said. "Biosystems Engineering plans to collect biomass from certain species of eucalyptus trees that can be harvested every three to five years. These species are complementary to food production and are already being used on Australian farms as wind screens and to tackle salinity and boost biodiversity. "Using them as a renewable fuel may offer a win-win outcome for farmers and could potentially create a new model for community based biomass energy hubs

in rural Australia." The \$3.5 million project aims to collect 15,000 tonnes of chipped Mallee at a plantation near Casino in New South Wales during a 33-day harvester trial. This will be used to supplement feedstock to the 30MW bioenergy power plant at the Broadwater sugar mill in NSW. Mr Frischknecht said the harvester will use a clever design that could significantly lower the cost of producing wood chips for biomass. "The harvesting process is designed to integrate with in-field haulout vehicles and roadside collection, similar to the current supply chain model for sugar cane." Biosystems Engineering plans to increase the size of the harvester and upgrade the design to enable it to operate under full-scale commercial conditions. The harvester also has potential as an Australian technology export, should it be successfully developed and perform to expectations. The project is scheduled for completion in 2017. 



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