



Media Release

\$15 million for world-class biotech facility

[Original View \[0\]](#)

Monday, 27 November 2006

A \$15 million Federal Government grant has been awarded to help create a new plant research facility aimed at boosting agricultural research and the plant biotech industry.

The National Plant Phenomics Facility, which consists of the Plant Accelerator to be established in Adelaide and the High Resolution Plant Phenomics Centre in Canberra, will be the first of its kind in the public sector anywhere in the world.

The collaborative national facility will be led by the University of Adelaide and involves research partners at [CSIRO Plant Industry \[1\]](#) and the [Australian National University \[2\]](#) (ANU), as well as industry groups and Federal and South Australian government departments.

Federal Government funding for the facility was announced this morning by the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon. [Julie Bishop \[3\]](#) MP.

"This facility will provide a competitive edge for Australia's \$27 billion annual agriculture export industry," says [Professor Mark Tester \[4\]](#), Federation Fellow with the University of Adelaide's [School of Agriculture, Food and Wine \[5\]](#).

"It will allow researchers to respond faster to market needs, increase the quality of plant science research and accelerate the transfer of these advances to benefit our local industry.

"The facility could also lead to major discoveries that hold the key to solving some of the world's greatest problems in crop production, such as tolerance to salinity and drought."

The **Plant Accelerator**, which will be located at the University of Adelaide's [Waite Campus \[6\]](#), will use robotic techniques to take 3D images of plants, recording their size, colour, temperature and provide an insight into overall plant health.

The Plant Accelerator is the first public sector facility of its type and scale in the world. It will consist of a series of hi-tech greenhouses and laboratories that can accommodate 160,000 plants a year.

"This high-throughput facility will be available for all Australian plant scientists and will greatly assist our researchers in 'phenotyping' plants - that is, identifying the role of each plant gene in the function of the whole plant," says [Professor Geoff Fincher \[7\]](#), Director of the University of Adelaide's Waite Campus.

The **High Resolution Phenomics Technology Centre** will be located in Canberra at CSIRO Plant Industry and ANU. This facility will adapt and apply the next generation of research tools to probe plant function and performance, under controlled conditions and in the field. Recent advances in robotics, imaging and computing will be used in applying these technologies.

"Phenomics has the potential to revolutionise the way that researchers tackle key issues in plant and agricultural biology," says [Dr Jeremy Burdon \[8\]](#), Chief of CSIRO Plant Industry.

"Research at the facility will aid the development of new crops for improved human health or for novel uses such as pharmaceuticals, and also improve sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation."

The \$15 million grant from the Federal Government's [National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy \[9\]](#) (NCRIS) fund, will go towards the total of almost \$50 million needed to establish the facility, with the remainder of the funding expected to come from partner institutions, industry and other government sources.

Construction of the National Plant Phenomics Facility is expected to begin in 2007, with all facilities in Adelaide and Canberra completed by 2009.

Breaking news:

[SA government adds \\$10 million to biotech facility \[10\]](#)

[Professor Mark Tester \(email\) \[11\]](#)

ARC Federation Fellow

School of Agriculture, Food and Wine
The University of Adelaide
Business: +61 8 8303 7159
Mobile: 0423 784 428

[Dr Jeremy Burdon \(website\) \[12\]](#)

Chief
CSIRO Plant Industry
Business: +61 2 6246 5546

[David Ellis \(email\) \[13\]](#)

[website \[14\]](#)
Media Officer and Editor, Adelaidean
Marketing & Strategic Communications
The University of Adelaide
Business: +61 8 8303 5414
Mobile: +61 421 612 762

[Sophie Clayton \(email\) \[15\]](#)

[website \[16\]](#)
Media Officer
CSIRO Plant Industry
Business: +61 2 6246 5139
Mobile: 0418 626 860

[Jane O'Dwyer \(email\) \[17\]](#)

[website \[18\]](#)
Media Manager
The Australian National University
Business: +61 2 6125 5001
Mobile: 0416 249 231



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Possible design of the new Plant Accelerator at the University's Waite Campus

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Professor Mark Tester
[Full Image \(114.81K\) \[22\]](#)

- [0] <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/news/news16141.html>
- [1] <http://www.csiro.au/plantindustry>
- [2] <http://www.anu.edu.au/>
- [3] <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/bishop/>
- [4] <http://plantscience.acpfg.com.au/>
- [5] <http://www.agwine.adelaide.edu.au/>
- [6] <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/campuses/waite/>
- [7] <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/directory/geoffrey.fincher>
- [8] <http://www.csiro.au/people/jeremy.burdon>
- [9] http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/ncris/
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- [11] <mailto:mark.testler@acpfg.com.au>
- [12] <http://www.csiro.au/plantindustry>
- [13] <mailto:david.ellis@adelaide.edu.au>
- [14] <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/news/>
- [15] <mailto:Sophie.Clayton@csiro.au>
- [16] <http://www.csiro.au/plantindustry>
- [17] <mailto:jane.odwyer@anu.edu.au>
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