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Friday 22nd October, 2010

RENEWABLE ENERGY A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE FARM INCOME SAYS NEW NUFFIELD SCHOLAR

Robert Nichols, from Sassafras in Tasmania, will tonight be awarded a prestigious Nuffield Scholarship supported by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Chicken Meat Program.

Robert is planning on studying renewable energy as an alternative farm income. He says “while there is significant interest from farmers wishing to understand more about the renewable energy industry, there is a lack of information available.”

Robert is convinced that opportunities exist for the bio-digestion of manures and factory wastes as well as green crops that can be grown specifically for energy production.

He says “with farm cropping options exposed to competition from overseas imports I see the home production of renewable energy as being an industry that has little or no import challenges and one that holds significant openings for the Australian farming community.”

Robert’s operations include the 250 ha Nichols Farms, which supply in excess of 750,000 chickens and 30,000 turkeys per year for the Nichols Poultry processing business. He is also sole director of Blowing in the Wind P/L which was established in 2008 to operate a 225 KW wind turbine to generate a significant portion of the energy Nichols Poultry requires.

Nuffield Australia is an organisation which provides an opportunity to Australian farmers to travel overseas on an agricultural research scholarship. It is a 16-week program which consists of both group and individual travel. The next group will be travelling through New Zealand, North America, Brazil, Mexico and France in February-March 2011.

The Chicken Meat Program of RIRDC is funded by chicken meat industry levies which are matched by Commonwealth Government funds. It aims to stimulate and promote research and development that will deliver a profitable, productive and sustainable Australian chicken meat industry that provides quality wholesome food to the nation.

Dr Elisa Heylin from the RIRDC Chicken Meat Program says “we are pleased to be supporters of the Nuffield program which we believe provides opportunities for leadership development and capacity building for the industry.”

Robert is available for interviews to talk about his planned study.

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A high-resolution photo of Robert is available for download from nuffield.com.au/gallery.html