

Botanical Resources

Forty per cent of the world's pyrethrum is grown and harvested by Botanical Resources Australia (BRA) in the stunningly scenic north-west of Tasmania.

However, it is BRA's research capability and focus on innovation, not its location that is breaking ground in the health biotech industry.

Manager of Product Development Brian Chung said "BRA is continually working to be the best in the world in crop production and harvesting, in manufacturing process and quality control, and in product and market development".

In BRA's core area of pyrethrum, the company is researching ways to improve crop storage and post-harvest management and to find more growth opportunities for



A Pyrethrum crop growing in Tasmania.

the product. It is developing more effective methods of using pyrethrum with particular emphasis on resistance management.

Pyrethrum is the world's oldest known naturally occurring insecticide and is used around the world to control all types of insects, including mosquitoes, flies, garden pests, and head lice.

Operations Manager Matthew Greenhill said "a lot of existing pyrethrum products contain a synthetic form of pyrethrum synergist called piperonyl butoxide, but the presence of a synthetic ingredient restricts access to important markets, such as the organic markets".

BRA is also applying the specialist skills and resources it has developed in working with pyrethrum to other medicinal crops.

The company grows Australia's largest echinacea crop, a herb that has been proven to stimulate the body's immune system. In addition, BRA has also been researching artemesia, since the World Health Organisation recently recommended it as a preferred treatment for malaria.

There has been a lot of research done on tropical and sub-tropical plants but not a lot is known about the health applications of plants from temperate climates, such as native plants in Tasmania.

BRA would like to take a whole lot of Tasmanian native plants and screen their extracts against a range of tests to determine what properties they may have, such as insecticidal, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal ingredients.

In the long term the company plans to develop a database of the medicinal properties of a range of native plants, and work with other companies and research organisations to explore commercial opportunities.

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