

Karara Builds a Sustainable Future with Innovative Biodiesel and Egg Production Initiatives

New ventures at the Geoff Wedlock Innovation Park set to reduce Karara's environmental footprint

Biodiesel created from waste vegetable oil and free-range eggs produced by a mobile "chicken caravan" are just some of the innovative new sustainable business initiatives being fostered by the Mid West region's largest resources project, the \$3 billion Karara iron ore project.

The initiatives – which were developed by a group of forward-thinking Karara Mining Limited staff in response to an internal competition to come up with ways to reduce the giant project's environmental footprint and improve its operations – are being brought to life at the Geoff Wedlock Innovation Park, named after the late former Chairman of Gindalbie Metals.

KML is jointly owned by Gindalbie and the leading Chinese steel and iron ore company Ansteel.

This former farming property, located en route to the Karara Mine Site some 200km from Geraldton, was purchased by Karara and set aside to provide a long-term Mid West innovation development centre for mining and non-mining ventures that will assist KML to achieve its community ambitions and provide alternative employment pathways particularly for the local indigenous population.

KML has recently completed the installation of a biodiesel pilot plant, which processes waste vegetable oil used for cooking at the Karara Village and converts it into fuel.

Positive results were returned from trials conducted with a small fleet of 4WD's utilising the biodiesel, allowing KML to look at other ways to use the environmentally-friendly fuel on a larger scale, such as in generators, for blasting and for other vehicles on site.

Future plans for the plant facilities include the collection of waste oil from nearby mining camps, as well as local towns and facilities, contributing to the community and reducing its overall environmental impact.

Biodiesel is the single, most effective greenhouse gas reduction technology that exists for diesel engines today, as well as being a renewable and sustainable fuel source.

While waste vegetable oil from the Karara Village was previously transported by KML's facilities management provider, Sodexo, off site to be recycled in Perth, KML now benefits from the value created through reduced trucking and carbon emissions from transport, a reduced requirement for diesel brought to site as well as gaining carbon credit and Government excise grants.

The plant is able to currently produce 100L per batch with each batch taking four days to produce. Due to the success of the project, KML are currently looking to increase productivity through the addition of a train into the processing facility, or through alternative methods of converting WVO into biodiesel.

The biodiesel developed at the plant is currently used to fuel a small fleet of on-site 4WD's, however future plans for the plant facilities include the collection of waste oil from nearby mining camps, as well as local towns and facilities, contributing to the community and reducing overall environmental impact.

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KML has also recently launched a sustainable free-range egg producing business, acquiring a custom-designed “chicken caravan” that will be home to 450 free-range chickens which are expected to lay approximately 360 eggs per day – replacing more than a quarter of the eggs currently purchased, mostly from interstate, to feed the Karara workforce.

The chicken operation will be undertaken in accordance with KML’s sustainable farming practices and managed under an arrangement between the Mullewa Employment & Economic Development Aboriginal Corporation (MEEDAC) and Sodexo, and is expected to employ approximately five to 10 part-time personnel.

KML’s environmental initiatives extend to utilising the chicken manure, which will be used to organically prepare wheat paddocks for rehabilitation. In addition, a portion of the manure will be combined with putrescible waste from the Karara Village and processed via a bio-digester into methane gas for power production and organic solid and liquid fertiliser for various applications.

Karara Mining Limited CEO, Steve Murdoch, said the two new initiatives at the Geoff Wedlock Innovation Park were great examples of innovative ideas and technology being used to reduce the Karara mine site’s environmental impact while at the same time delivering genuine cost savings and benefits to the operation.

“Geoff Wedlock was one of the innovators of the broader industry and the Park is a fitting tribute. It has been set up within a number of precincts to foster businesses that we believe are best placed to integrate with KML and the community,” Mr Murdoch said.

“KML provides the foundation for these businesses by either providing land free of charge or undertaking to off-take all or a substantial proportion of the businesses products.

“It is through good ideas like these, generated by KML employees, that we have implemented innovative technology and sustainable farming practices as a step towards reducing the environmental impact of mine site operations,” he said.

“As we further develop these initiatives, our aim is to expand them so they reduce not only Karara’s environmental footprint, but that of the entire Mid West region,” Mr Murdoch added.

The next project for the Park will be the establishment of an aquaponics system which will grow fish, marron, fruit and vegetables for sale to Sodexo for consumption in the Karara Village. This project has been in trial phase since early 2012, growing vegetables and silver perch. KML has also been trialling whether a native species nursery program is enhanced by using aquaponics growth techniques.

Initial trials have been hugely successful and Karara now intends to develop a large scale integrated nursery, fish/marron farm and vegetable/fruit cropping operation at the Geoff Wedlock Innovation Park, aimed initially at supplying the Karara Village with potential to eventually supply the broader Mid West.

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