The Soils for Life Program

Outcomes Australia's Soils for Life Program has the principal purpose of enhancing the natural environment through the provision of information and education on innovative leading performance in managing Australia's natural environment, particularly with a focus on our rural landscape. The Soils for Life Program aims to facilitate positive and sustained change in how the Australian rural landscape is managed to ensure a thriving natural environment for the benefit of all Australians.

Landscape degradation is an issue of national and global concern, as precious resources of soil and water, necessary to sustain life, continue to be lost or degraded. The current state of the Australian natural landscape is further challenged by stresses from changing climate, unsustainable management practices, increased mining activity and urban expansion.

The Soils for Life Program recognises that these many environmental challenges will impact significantly not only on the productivity and viability of agricultural enterprises but also on the health of our environment and the wellbeing of every Australian.

The Soils for Life Program further recognises that the national and global challenges being faced are interrelated and can be best met through a comprehensive coordinated approach focused on improved regenerative environmental and landscape management practices.

The Soils for Life Program addresses the need for improved environmental landscape management through advancing our understanding of the current challenges and identifying leading practice in water use efficiency, building soil health, regeneration of vegetation, enhancing biodiversity, enterprise resilience and profitability and promoting sustainable land-use methods.

Farmers Showing the Way

Soils for Life is focusing on demonstrating, documenting and promoting leading performance in farm-based landscape and water management. To this end, we have established 19 initial case studies across a range of regions and land use types.

Selected case studies were researched and interviewed by the Soils for Life field team between January and June 2012, and these sites are now hosting Field Days as part of our information and demonstration program.

Findings of the case studies highlighted regenerative landscape management practices being applied by innovative farmers, include:

- Using organic composts, fertilisers and bio-amendments;
- Encouraging natural biological cycles and nutrient transfer;
- Implementing time-controlled planned grazing;
- Using grazing practices and animal impact as farm and ecosystem development tools;
- Retaining stubble or performing biological stubble breakdown;
- Constructing interventions in the landscape or waterways to slow or capture the flow of water;
- Fencing off water ways and implementing water reticulation for stock;
- Investing in revegetation;
- Pasture cropping;
- Direct-drill cropping and pasture sowing;
- Changing crop rotations;
- Incorporating green manure or under-sowing of legumes;
- Maximising species diversity;
- Reducing or ceasing synthetic chemical inputs; and
- Integrating farm-based enterprises.

As a result of adopting these practices, many of these farmers are achieving increased and sustainable production, profit, and improving the health and resilience of their landscape.

The full Soils for Life report *Innovations for Regenerative Landscape Management* and individual case studies are available on the Soils for Life website – http://www.soilsforlife.org.au/