



Farming for Sustainable Soils

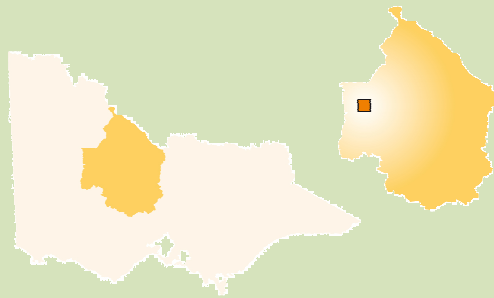
COMMUNITIES PROTECTING THE SOIL

Group Name

Lower Avon-Richardson Group

Key Achievements

- Local soils plan
- Six moisture probes installed throughout the district
- Six rain gauges installed to assist in making decisions to farm more sustainably
- Adoption of sustainable farming practices



Group Area

The Lower Avon-Richardson area is a sub-catchment of the Avon-Richardson basin that terminates at Lake Buloke. The area is at the bottom of a 330,000ha closed catchment that has local and regional groundwater issues. Soils have high sodium and boron levels due to salinity and the initial geological formations. These soils are difficult to manage and expensive to manipulate.

About the Group

Formed in 2009 by a group of landholders in and around the Lake Buloke area, the group now consists of 15 landholders. The main industry is cropping but most landholders run a mixed farming enterprise with sheep or cattle.

Land use

A high proportion of farmers currently use minimum-till or direct drill cropping systems. Farmers in the area have returned to cereal production rather than legume and oilseeds to mitigate the risk against rainfall deficiency and to capture the hay market.

The Lower Avon-Richardson is a mixed farming area where farms are typically wheat-sheep based enterprises. Much of the perennial native vegetation has been cleared and land use is predominantly opportunity cropping on the Lake surrounds, along with broad acre cereal and legume production across more than 20,000ha. The cropping systems are mostly no-till/direct drill.



2010-2011 Activities

- Increase grazing of perennials by trialling the adoption of forage shrubs and native grasses
- Conservation cropping through enhanced soil and soil water monitoring
- Training and demonstration practices that increase soil health

2012 Activities

- Conservation cropping
- Perennial based grazing of native grasses and forage shrubs
- Soil monitoring and evaluation
- Training and demonstration practices that increase soil health