



Farming for Sustainable Soils

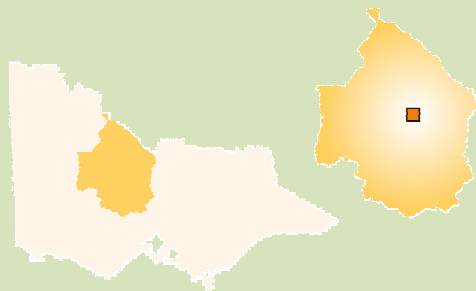
COMMUNITIES PROTECTING THE SOIL

Group Name

Loddon Plains Group

Key Achievements

- Local soil plans
- Adoption of minimum till techniques
- Yield Prophet training for 15 landholders
- Adoption of pasture cropping in to lucerne to maintain groundcover
- Adoption of perennial native pastures



Group Area

The area extends from Serpentine, north to Loddon Vale and east through Raywood across to Drummartin.

About the Group

The group of 15 members has an average age of 40 years. Dynamic and forward thinking, these farmers are seeking information on the latest technologies and innovations that will increase the sustainability of their farming operations. All members were significantly impacted on during the flood events of 2010-11.

Land use

The main land uses are grazing sheep for wool production and prime lambs. Dairying is also conducted in the irrigation areas of Dingee and Calivil. There is a small amount of farmers who also graze beef cattle. Cropping is the other main enterprise, with a variety of

crops grown, from traditional cereals to oilseeds and legumes and hay production from lucerne.



2010-2011 Activities

- Sowing perennial pasture species into existing lucerne stands
- Monitoring soil water under different land uses in a range of soil types
- Establishment of native pasture species
- Machinery modification to permit adoption of direct drill sowing
- Soil sampling and analysis for organic and total carbon at depths; sites GPS recorded
- Contract sowing to enable use of modern technology such as inter-row cropping and disc and tyne sowing
- Establish native windbreaks/shelterbelts to reduce wind velocity and hence soil erosion across paddocks

2012 Activities

- Continue to change the composition of lucerne pastures to improve and maintain ground cover and protect soil from wind erosion
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of year one and two on farm practices on soil condition
- To investigate the interactions between cropping and livestock and how this system can be managed to protect soil health
- To investigate stubble management techniques that lead to a move away from burning and heavy grazing of stubbles over the summer period to maintain groundcover
- Build the local capacity of farmers through training and demonstration of practices that increase soil health