

Innovative Farming

Productive farming for a variable water future



NEWSLETTER - April 2013



Welcome...

...to the fifth edition of the North Central Catchment Management Authority's (CMA's) **Innovative Farming** newsletter.

This edition includes a recap of events the Farming for Australian Conditions project has run over the past couple of months, information about our upcoming events, and articles I hope you'll find of interest.

I was lucky enough to be able to interview Joel Salatin, who *Time Magazine* recently labelled 'the world's most innovative farmer', while he was in Australia. The discussion hit on many topics concerning agriculture and health. The key points included: where agriculture (and society) has found itself; the future of farming; traditional wisdom and the impact marketing has had on our health. The full interview transcript is available on request by contacting me at joel.spry@nccma.vic.gov.au

Kilter Pty Ltd also kindly provided an article for this edition focusing on their agroforestry venture in their Future Farming Landscapes project region. A bus trip will be held in May and will tour the Kilter Pty Ltd property and developments. Hopefully you can join this informative tour of innovation in the region.

I hope you enjoy the read. As always, if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for topics please let me know.

Joel Spry

What's been happening?

Future Farming Expo- Yarrawalla

The Future Farming Expo was held in Yarrawalla on 14 March. In perfect weather for an expo, more than 150 people attended to hear from 18 speakers, on topics ranging from accurate weather forecasting, regenerative agriculture, soil pit demonstration, biological farming, the power of social media for farmers, romancing the next generation and many other fascinating topics. To obtain a copy of the presentations please keep an eye on our website www.nccma.vic.gov.au



Roger Wrigley from Wrigley Dillon explaining to the audience the characteristics and production capabilities of the local soil



Irrigation Modernisation Farm Walk- Gary Wight's property

A farm walk was held as a part of the Gunbower Island Week celebrations 18 – 23 March. The walk took place on the property of Gary and Jo Wight, on the outskirts of Cohuna.

The Wight's generously opened up their property to the public to share their progress and experience of converting their flood irrigation into a modernised pipe and riser irrigation system. Approximately 40 people were on hand to ask questions of Gary and Jo, along with representatives from the system installers, automatic irrigation sales representatives, as well as Department of Primary Industries' staff.



The Cohuna farm walk looked at the installation phase of an irrigation modernisation project

Upcoming program

There are a number of events rapidly approaching. If you are interested in attending any (or all) of these free events then please RSVP as soon as possible, as places are very limited. All RSVPs, along with any related questions, can be made either by phone on (03) 5448 7124 or email: info@nccma.vic.gov.au

Biological Farming Information days

Two information sessions will be presented in May (7 May in Kerang and 21 May in Echuca) on Biological Farming for Northern Victoria. Elise Wenden from Fruition Nutrition will present:

- Biological farming - why you should consider a change

- The technical details - making compost, compost tea, applying beneficial organisms to your soil and many others
- Report on some recent biological soil tests completed within the northern Victorian irrigation region
- Demonstrations of sampling techniques and other tools including refractometer usage, penetrometer, pH measurements and others (Echuca only)

Graeme Hand - Holistic Management to increase stocking rate in Northern Victoria

An on-farm learning session with Graeme Hand (one of seven Holistic Management® Educators in Australia trained through the internationally acclaimed Savory Institute) will be held in Loddon Vale on the Thursday 6 June.

Learn how you can apply Holistic Management to your property to work towards a sustainable future.

'In our eyes, people count, healthy land is essential, and money matters' Holistic Management International

Kilter Pty Ltd Future Farming Landscapes Tour

A field day to learn more about the Future Farming Landscapes project in the Lake Boga area will be held on properties managed by Kilter Pty Ltd on Thursday 16 May. A field day bus will depart from the Lake Boga Community Centre at 1.00 pm and return at 3.30 pm.

The field day includes site visits to see firsthand sub-surface drip irrigation, gravity irrigation, direct seeding programs and an agroforestry demonstration.

Graeme Hand and Colin Seis- Pasture Cropping in Northern Victoria

Pasture Cropping pioneer Colin Seis will team up with Holistic Management Educator Graeme Hand to discuss and look at the possibilities and profitability



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



of utilising pasture cropping and native grasses in northern Victoria. This is a not to be missed event and will be held in Lockington on Wednesday 12 June.

Joel Salatin Interview

I was lucky enough to be able to interview Joel Salatin, who Time Magazine called 'the world's most innovative farmer', while he was in Australia. Our discussion hit on many topics surrounding where agriculture (and society) has found itself, the future of farming, traditions and health. The Polyface 'the farm of many faces' website is well worth a look. You can find it at www.polyfacefarms.com
A full interview transcript is available on request by contacting joel.spry@nccma.vic.gov.au



At a recent event you were asked about the vegetarianism/animal welfare movement and your farms stance on animals. You said "I love animals; we should eat more of them". Have you got any comments about vegetarianism and also about the impact on the environment as in removing the herbivores and the natural processes of ecology?

In my book, 'Folks, this ain't normal', I spend a lot of time articulating the historical place of the herbivore. We know (through historical observations and recordings by early explorers) that Australia used to have megafauna - huge herbivorous and marsupial critters - along with 18% organic matter and a hydration with streams, springs and water. Deep soils, rich and verdant, it was spectacular. The land degradation is really hard to imagine. The other thing that we have to deal with of course, is that there has been a lot of damage from overgrazing and from improper use of herbivores.

The whole thing is to try to recreate in a person's mind the historical role of the herbivore, which was

as a biomass pruner, to prune the biomass back, to restart the fast accumulation cycle between infancy and senescence. If the plant is overgrazed, in infancy and under grazed to senescence, both of those extremities shut off the chlorophyllic/photosynthetic engine. And that's why there aren't any places in the world, except maybe Antarctica, that don't have a herbivore, because it's the herbivore that's necessary to sustain life. It's the pruner to restart this fast biomass accumulation cycle.

Most people, certainly if they have read the UN's *Long Shadow* report and things by the radical environmentalist community, are completely jaundiced, not realising that all those reports are based on an anti-natural role of the herbivore. Feeding it grain, feeding it dead cows, chicken manure, chicken feathers, overgrazing, are all completely unnatural. A type of non-movement oriented type of thing where animals just continuously graze. It's ok to have fences, but if you have fences, you break down the migratory patterns.

You have got to re-introduce that type of migratory movement within your fences. It is trying to again, differentiate the historically normal role of the herbivore and predation, with the abnormal role that humans have assumed for that herbivore. Now we can take the technology we have (such as electric fencing) and re-mimic that historical role. Guess what? We can re-hydrate the landscape, sequester carbon, we can do some amazing, wonderful things. In fact it's the most efficacious tool to do so, but you are not going to do it the way the studies and the data, that support the anti-herbivore agenda, assume.

Kilter Pty Ltd article

Future Farming Landscapes and Agroforestry

In terms of the area that it covers, agroforestry does not occupy a large proportion of the Future Farming Landscapes (FFL) project. However, we view the agroforestry enterprise as an important component of the FFL landscape – providing various benefits and 'ecosystem services' including shelter for adjacent



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



crops and livestock; carbon sequestration; biodiversity; improved connectivity, perennality and soil condition; and numerous potential 'products', including seed for foodstocks and revegetation, firewood, furniture timbers, fence posts, honey etc.



Given the challenging environmental conditions (maximum summer temperatures can sit above 50°C for days, and winter frosts are not uncommon), the FFL approach includes use of low-cost irrigation tape that is rolled out at the same time the trees are planted – using the Kilter-built tree planter. Another purpose-built component of the agroforestry system is the portable watering pump, which allows automatic, controlled watering of the agroforestry blocks through a computerised system mounted on a trailer. This system is moved around the FFL agroforestry blocks to effect slow, deep watering over several days as required.

Over the past three years, pupils from local primary schools, contractors, and Kilter Pty Ltd and VicSuper staff have established two large agroforestry areas within the FFL landscape. The first, a 30 ha plot supporting a variety of tree species, both indigenous and introduced, was inundated during the January 2011 floods. The plot was replanted in mid-2012 with species more tolerant of inundation, including Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), Eumong (*Acacia stenophylla*) and Swamp Yate (*Eucalyptus occidentalis*).

The second agroforestry planting (55 ha) was established in Autumn 2011 and supports a wide variety of tree and shrub species including Sugar Gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*), Black Box (*E. largiflorens*), Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*), Red Gum, Swamp Yate, Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*), River Sheoak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*), Swamp Sheoak (*C. obesa*), Silky Oak (*Grevillea robusta*), River Coobah and Old Man Saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*). The *Acacia* plants support healthy numbers of hemi-parasitic Australian Sandalwood plants, planted as seeds following establishment of the host plants.

Despite intensive control efforts, these plantings have been hit hard by rabbits and hares... so much so that Kilter worked jointly with Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) to establish a rabbit-proof fence between the agroforestry plantings and the channel running alongside the treed area. As well as a regular baiting program, we are now also working with a local group of Sporting Shooters Association members to target rabbits and foxes. On a recent visit, this group killed 160 rabbits, four foxes and four hares.

One of the FFL agroforestry plots will be on display at the Sustainable Farming Field Day on Thursday 16 May, with Kilter Pty Ltd staff available to provide interpretation and discussion.



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

BIOLOGICAL FARMING

Information Days

Kerang

Venue: Kerang Football Clubrooms, Kerang Recreation Reserve, Wyndham Street, Kerang
Date: Tuesday 7 May
Time: 10.00am – 2.00pm

Elise Wenden from Fruition Nutrition will present

- Biological farming – why you should consider a change
- The technical details – making compost, compost tea, applying beneficial organisms to your soil and many others
- Report on some recent biological soil tests completed within the northern Victorian irrigation region

Echuca West

Venue: Ko Warra Native Grasses, 537 Echuca Mitiamo Road, Echuca West
Date: Tuesday 21 May
Time: 10.00am – 2.00pm

Elise Wenden from Fruition Nutrition will present

- The analysis and results of biological soil tests for this property
- Biological farming – why you should consider a change
- The technical details – making compost, compost tea, applying beneficial organisms to your soil and many others
- Demonstrations of sampling techniques and other tools including refractometer usage, penetrometer, pH measurements and others

Places are strictly limited. To secure a place at these limited seating events please RSVP either location before Monday 6 May to **p: (03) 5448 7124** or **e: info@nccma.vic.gov.au**



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



KILTER – Future Farming Landscapes

FIELD DAY

**FREE
BUS TOUR**

A VicSuper initiative to invest ethically in sustainable land use in Victoria

A field day focusing on the Future Farming Landscapes project being undertaken by Kilter on behalf of VicSuper will be held on Thursday 16 May.

Participants will depart by bus at 1:00pm sharp from the Lake Boga Community Centre to tour local development sites. The bus will return at approximately 3.30pm.

Come and see for yourself some of the projects being undertaken including:

- Subsurface drip irrigation
- Gravity irrigation development
- Direct seeding programs
- Agroforestry demonstration

Places are strictly limited. Early registration is strongly encouraged – RSVP closes on 14 May. Please RSVP to the North Central CMA on p: (03) 5448 7124 or e: info@nccma.vic.gov.au



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



Future Farming Landscapes



Profitability through Native Grasses

*On farm
learning
session*

On farm learning session with Graeme Hand, one of seven Holistic Management® Educators in Australia trained through the internationally acclaimed Savory Institute.

*'In our eyes, people count, healthy land is essential,
and money matters'*

Holistic Management International

Location:
Loddon Vale
Date: 6 June 2013

Register your interest with the
North Central CMA (03) 5448 7124
or email: info@nccma.uic.gov.au



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY





Date: 12 June 2013
Location: Lockington



Upcoming event

PASTURE CROPPING & NATIVE GRASSES FOR PROFITABILITY

Featuring Graeme Hand & Colin Seis

Register your interest with the North Central CMA
(03) 5448 7124 or email info@nccma.vic.gov.au



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY