

## **\$1.2 million for 20 innovative natural resource projects**

The Australian Government is providing more than \$1.2 million for 20 projects to encourage the use of new innovative and sustainable agriculture practices. **For more information on the National Landcare Program, visit [www.daff.gov.au/landcare](http://www.daff.gov.au/landcare) or contact Luke Bayley on 02 60 437 624/ 0408 251 861**

The 20 projects, which will be undertaken by landcare groups, individuals and small businesses around Australia, were chosen by an independent panel, and will receive individual grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$128,600. The projects include:

- on-farm processing of chicken litter to produce soil fertiliser in WA
- the use of circle hooks in commercial fisheries to improve hook selectivity in SA
- using electromagnetic induction mapping to boost productivity and resource management across the low-rainfall Mallee region
- environmental management systems for organic beef producers in northern NSW

Projects in the banana, sugar and broad acre cropping industries will also benefit.

Natural Resource Innovation Grants help individuals, community groups and businesses in Australia's food, aquaculture and forest industries to test new strategies and approaches to natural resources management.

The projects funded are primarily aimed at increasing on-farm profitability and boosting the sustainability of Australia's natural resource base. As such, they should encourage similar actions in other industries and regions.

Successful NRM innovation projects will recognise that innovative practices, processes and products help stimulate national economic and employment growth, encourage the sustainable use of Australia's natural resource base and also help individual rural businesses increase their profitability.

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Projects funded in the last round..

## **Natural Resource Innovation Grants 2004-05**

### **Subsoils in profile – practical identification of subsoil constraints (\$56,500)**

FarmLink Research will sample subsoils in 150 paddocks across southern NSW and produce a map that identifies problem areas. The project will enable people to better identify and manage problems such as acidity, salinity and sodicity. It will also encourage more efficient water use for crops and pastures, and reduce deep drainage and off-site nutrient transfer.

**Contact:** Kirrily Condon, FarmLink Research, NSW (02) 6978 0428

**Planning and Demonstrating Organic Beef Production within the context of an enterprise Environmental Management System, and Property Native Vegetation Management Planning (\$109,750)**

Upper Clarence Combined Landcare Inc will help six beef cattle grazing enterprises develop environmental management systems that incorporate property vegetation management planning. The enterprises are planning to change from conventional to organic beef production, and the project will look at some of the constraints to making this change. The project will also help land managers become more involved in sustainable natural resource management.

**Contact:** Terry Moody, Upper Clarence Combined Landcare Inc, NSW (02) 6665 3133

**Implementing a lower cost, low-impact and high-yielding cane farming system (\$83,655)**

Granshaw Farming aims to improve the productive capacity of sugarcane growing soils by adopting a new farming system that includes reduced tillage, controlled traffic, legume break crops and direct-drilled, legume companion crops. The project aims to significantly reduce irrigation, tillage, herbicide, fertiliser and harvesting costs.

**Contact:** Bryan Granshaw, Granshaw Farming, Qld (07) 4784 0141

**Pioneering broad-scale innovative farming for a sustainable Isis sugar industry (\$74,682)**

The Isis Landcare Group will demonstrate sustainable land management techniques on eight sites in the Kingston Farmlands area. The techniques include break cropping, minimum till practices with a modified rotary hoe, and incorporating trickle tape and subsurface irrigation into existing farm systems. The project aims to increase on-farm productivity, improve soil health, and water and nutrient management.

**Contact:** Wayne Stanley, Isis Landcare Group, Qld (07) 4126 1444

**Broad acre trials of the effect of application of compost tea inoculant on microbial balance in soil, nutrient uptake and productivity in ginger, grapes and other crops on the Sunshine Coast (\$42,100)**

Natural Resource Management South East Queensland will undertake broad acre trials of the effect a compost tea inoculant has on the microbial balance, the nutrient uptake and the productivity of soils used to grow ginger, grapes and other crops on the Sunshine Coast. The technique aims to restore the soil microbial balance by increasing the populations of beneficial aerobic microbes. It is anticipated that this will also encourage nitrogen-fixing bacteria, increasing the efficiency of fertiliser applications.

**Contact:** Susie Chapman, Natural Resource Management S-E Qld (07) 3211 4404

**Resource monitoring for crop options – Top Crop (\$61,300)**

The Eastern Downs Turn Around Group will provide landholders with information on the influence of topography on microclimates to help improve their land management practices. The farm-based project will enable participating growers to quantify the extreme variations in farm temperature, and classify soil profiles for their water holding capacity and nutrient content. This will help farmers select more appropriate cropping strategies in particular areas.

**Contact:** Andrea Middleton, Eastern Downs Turn Around Group, Qld (07) 4661 3907

**Facilitating uptake of minimum tillage and fallow crops in the Herbert River cane industry (\$37,000)**

The Herbert River Catchment Group aims to increase the use of practices such as legume break cropping, minimum tillage, controlled traffic zones and trash blanket retention by making the necessary equipment available to cane farmers in the Herbert River.

**Contact:** Carolyn Coppo, Herbert River Catchment Group, Qld (07) 4777 2822

**Innovative equipment for installing drainage to improve the water quality of farm runoff in the Wet Tropics (\$21,250)**

Jackson Farming aims to improve drainage and water quality on banana farms by installing agricultural pipes in areas with run-off problems. This should also improve fruit growth and quality, improve operational safety, reduce the need to use fungicides on leaf disease and improve nutrient use.

**Contact:** Marc Jackson, Jackson Farming, Qld (07) 4066 5600

**Improving Agricultural Production Systems Through Innovation (\$128,600)**

Southern Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Farming Systems Group will carry out number of activities, including demonstrating the advantages of more accurately applying seed, nutrients and chemicals, implementing innovative weed control techniques, evaluating new liquid fertiliser technologies, and increasing production and water use by evaluating the shattering of limestone layers beneath the soil surface, and comparing a range of slitted treatments for sandy clay soils with ripped treatments.

**Contact:** Michael Richards, Southern Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Farming Systems Group, SA (08) 8853 2241

**Holistic use of chemical and non-chemical weed control methods in no-till farming systems (\$45,000)**

The South Australian No-Till Farmers Association is looking to increase the range of weed control methods used in no-till farming, including 'incorporated by sowing' (IBS) herbicides, introducing more competitive crop varieties and applying 'knife-rolling' technology. The project will help promote the benefits of no-till farming systems, and reduce herbicide dependence and resistance.

**Contact:** Rohan Rainbow, South Australian No-Till Farmers Association 0418 422 482

**The use of circle hooks to improve hook selectivity, while reducing mortality of target and non-target species (\$62,800)**

The SA Australian Fishing Industry Council will test the use of circle hooks to see if they can replace the more conventional 'J hook' on commercial fishing vessels in South Australia. The use of circle hooks could reduce the number of undersized fish taken, and reduce the post-release mortality rates of hooked fish. If successful, it should have broader applications in the recreational fishing industry.

**Contact:** Claire Van Der Geest, SEANET, SA (08) 8357 8545

**The Anna Creek Station Workshop on the application of telemetry and associated technologies in the pastoral industry (\$70,000)**

The Arid Areas Catchment Water Management Board will hold a workshop on the use of telemetry and associated technology in Great Artesian Basin rehabilitation works and pastoral management. The workshop will encourage landholders to install more efficient water delivery systems, incorporate better management practices, and encourage researchers and product providers to develop practical telemetry applications for the pastoral industry.

**Contact:** David Leek, Arid Areas Catchment Water Management Board, SA  
(08) 8204 9131

**Viable small-scale firewood harvesting and processing using low-cost sleds (\$24,850)**

Mt Lofty Ranges Private Forestry will evaluate an innovative, small-scale harvesting and processing system — the 'sled system' — for plantation-grown firewood. It will help make young farm forestry plantings in the Mount Lofty Ranges more viable. The project aims to encourage farm forestry projects that will deliver natural resource management benefits, such as reducing groundwater recharge, stream salinity and saline discharge.

**Contact:** Peter Bulman, Mt Lofty Ranges Private Forestry, SA (08) 8339 5055

**Implementing and demonstrating innovative methods of stubble retention in high rainfall and irrigation cropping systems (\$49,700)**

The Reynolds family will implement inter-row sowing technology in cropping areas for a range of benefits, including reducing water erosion and soil moisture evaporation, and better disease control. The project also involves using precision guidance technology to run controlled traffic farming; this will improve water penetration and soil structure.

**Contact:** Helen Reynolds, Victoria (03) 5828 8202

**Application of EM mapping technology to optimise productivity and resource management across the low rainfall Mallee (\$116,000)**

Mallee Sustainable Farming will combine electromagnetic induction and GPS technologies to map soil water content and water use by crops. The project will identify better management options for paddocks with variable soil types, including the improved targeting of inputs.

**Contact:** Beatrice Matthews, Mallee Sustainable Farming, Victoria (03) 5424 8274

**Trentham pilot Vegetation offsets Project (\$8,420)**

The Trentham and District Landcare Group will undertake a pilot project demonstrating how landcare groups can play an important role in identifying and defining native vegetation offset projects. The group will undertake landscape planning to identify potential sites for revegetation projects and encourage local landholders to participate.

**Contact:** Peter Hall, Trentham and District Landcare Group Victoria (03) 5424 8274

**Accurate agriculture for high fertiliser and herbicide efficiencies to maximise stubble retention practices in the low rainfall eastern wheatbelt region of WA (\$5,000)**

The Ninghan Farm Focus Group will quantify the efficiency gains of carefully siting crops away from retained stubble. The project aims to increase the use of stubble retention practices that result in more sustainable soil organic levels and help reduce wind erosion.

**Contact:** Geoffrey Anderson, Ninghan Farm Focus Group, WA (08) 9081 3111

**Development of an Environmental Impact Statement and evaluation of the potential for African mahogany plantation industry in the Kimberly region of Western Australia (\$42,500)**

Peter Crawford will investigate a new technique for establishing and managing African mahogany plantations in WA's Kimberly region. The seedlings will be irrigated in their first year only and, via the watering regime, encouraged to send a taproot down to the water table as quickly as possible. The project will

demonstrate the economic viability of mahogany plantations, as well as their environmental sustainability. The needs and attitudes of local Indigenous communities will be a special focus. **Contact:** Peter Crawford, WA 0409 201 552

**New cost-effective and broad-scale native plant establishment equipment, systems and industries (\$83,000)**

Greening Australia WA aims to reduce the establishment costs associated with setting up commercial-scale native crops by developing new direct-seeding equipment. In addition to the NRM benefits of more trees being planted, the project also aims to develop new native plant industries to provide extracts, food products, structural products, new local native fodder plants and essential oils.

**Contact:** Nathan McQuoid, Greening Australia WA (08) 9842 2754

**Demonstration of a Sustainable Organic Management System in Horticulture (\$126,200)**

SPARTEL Pty Ltd will demonstrate a sustainable, on-farm system that processes 'litter' into a product with a consistently higher nutrient value than conventionally stabilised litter. The new system also eliminates problems with fly breeding and other environmental and public health problems associated with the litter.

Applying 'in-shed' additives at the end of each batch will help retain the nitrogen. The system will help re-establish links between the horticulture and poultry industries, while also addressing important public and environmental health concerns.

**Contact:** Harrie Hofstede, SPARTEL Pty Ltd, WA (08) 9381 1927