

## I want healthy productive soils

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) is inviting producers to become involved in soil discussion groups as part of a healthy productive soils program.

Healthy soils are the foundation of a productive and profitable grazing system.

The **healthy productive soils** groups will support producers and advisors to investigate common soil issues and test solutions to achieve the soil condition they want. It will also provide access to the latest *healthy productive soils* resources and technical experts, enabling participants to develop the skills and confidence to diagnose and manage the health of their soil.

The producers we are looking for need to be passionate and motivated about soil health. They may come from existing groups or from new groups of farmers who all have a strong interest in their soil and profitable grazing systems. Groups need to have at least twelve participants and may include local advisors.

### Program details

Ten pilot soils groups will be established (newly formed or existing groups that cover the southern Feedbase area) which includes a paid group coordinator. Groups would meet around 6 times over a two year period. They would use a range of new and existing approaches and products to assess and improve the condition of the soils on their farms.

Activities would involve:

- (i) Assessment – using newly developed MLA *visual indicators* materials, along with soil testing and engagement with experts (researchers, advisors) to identify what are the limiting factors to improved soil health and what to apply.
- (ii) Product / practice application – to involve establishing test strips / subtraction trials with soil pits and deciding what observations to make to show soil health is improving.
- (iii) Review and discussion – Reflection on how the application of chosen treatments has worked, at an individual, group and wider community level.

Successful groups will be eligible for funding of up to \$25,000 per year to cover the costs of a coordinator for organising events, guest speakers, purchasing materials for trials and taking measurements.

Potential soil topics for exploration to include:

- Soil acidity
- Macro nutrient or Micro nutrient constraints
- Wet soils
- Soil biology
- Organic carbon
- Soil borne pathogens
- Structural issues

## What are the responsibilities and requirements of producer groups?

Groups will develop an agreed project plan based on their interests and issues with the Program Coordinator and be responsible for implementing it. Project funding will be negotiated with the Program Coordinator and a letter of agreement created. The project is expected to begin in 2019 and conclude in 2021 with a shared event with other groups.

## How to apply

To register your interest in the MLA Healthy Soils Discussion Groups please request and complete a one page expression of interest (EOI) form by November 23rd, 2018 and return it to the Project Coordinator.

The EOI should reflect the group's issues and interest in soil health and highlight any previous soil related activities they have been involved in. Please include how the group might be able to add value to the program to make it even more successful.

An MLA appointed selection panel will determine suitable groups based on involving credentialed producers who are committed to being involved in the project, chosen topic area, and their geographic spread. Groups will be notified of their success in December.

## More Information

For further information contact Program Coordinator.

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