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NRM NORTH FUNDS NEW SOIL CONDITION TRIALS

NRM North is helping farmers investigate methods of improving soil condition.

Six new trials are being funded by NRM North, through the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program.

NRM North's Regional Landcare Facilitator, Adrian James, said 13 trial proposals were received, and six were successful.

"Working in partnership with different farmers, agronomists and agribusinesses, in a range of locations with different soils and enterprises, this project has the potential to provide a lot of useful information for farmers over the next few years." Mr James said.

"NRM North will provide details and results in coming publications and will also run a series of field days at trial sites next year."

One of the trials by Rob Casey and Tas Agronomy Plus is investigating soil health and production from mixed blends of synthetic fertiliser with compost, poppy mulch and microbial stimulant.

The trial will be on 14 hectares of irrigated lucerne. Renew will provide assistance with soil biology assessments.

Janet and Charles Wallace and TP Jones will trial poppy seed waste and microbial stimulant on 71 hectares of cropping and grazing land.

This trial will compare the soil health and financial cost/benefits of those treatments with a high-input ryegrass.

The other trials are:

- Rob Henry, Crop Protection Research and Southern Farming Systems – a long-term trial to improve soil carbon and reduce acidification on 35 hectares of grazing land. Treatments will include a range of biological waste products, synthetic fertilisers and biochar.
- Bill Chilvers, Crop Protection Research and Southern Farming Systems – a similar trial but on 25 hectares of cropping land.
- Rob O'Connor, RuralSmart and Roberts – testing gypsum application rates on sodic soil under a canola crop for improved organic matter production and reduced erosion. Assessments will include germination rate, biomass production, yield, soil sodicity and cost effectiveness.
- Andrew McCarthy and Serve-Ag – trialling pasture cropping techniques on 22 hectares of sandy grazing land. Summer wheat and millet will be sown into ryegrass pastures

after different herbicide applications. The aim is to increase production and soil water holding capacity, reduce erosion and enable a shift towards perennial pastures on sandy banks.

NRM North's Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, said the organisation was pleased to be able to fund these trials and hoped to have another round next year.

"It's great to be able to provide funding for trials which will have regional benefits and will hopefully be supported and enhanced through other agricultural research and extension into the future." Mr McKee said.

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