



PO Box 121
Parkes
NSW 2870
Phone: (02) 6862 1255
Fax: (02) 6862 5254
Email: cwcfa@westserv.net.au

C03/2001

Central West Conservation Farming Association

14 July, 2003

Mervyn Sheather
Committee Manager
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

: Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management

The Central West Conservation Farming Association (CWCFA) is an organisation, which is farmer driven to address and adopt sustainable farming practices which are not only environmentally sustainable but economically sustainable as well.

Eight years ago there were about 800ha under conservation farming throughout the Central West, now there is over 1,000,000ha, due to the efforts and promotion by the CWCFA.

In one district agronomists area alone over the past few years 78,000ha have gone under no till farming and this is growing, as was proven at a recent field day held at Nyngan, with 120 farmers attending to learn more about sustainable farming practices.

The CWCFA committee has prepared and attached a submission based on the terms of reference supplied by the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management.

We would also like to extend an invitation to the Standing Committee to join us for a tour of some of the farms in the Central West to speak with farmers and the CWCFA executive at a time suitable to the committee.

We look forward to talking to you further.

Sincerely,

Ray Platt
Development Officer



PO Box 121
Parkes, NSW, 2870
P (02) 6862 1255
F (02) 6862 5254
E CWCFA@westserv.net.au
W www.confarming.com

Central West Conservation Farming Association

www.confarming.com

14 July, 2003

The Committee Manager,
Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

The following submission concerning sustainable management of natural resources in NSW is made on behalf of the Central West Conservation Farming Association (CWCFA). The CWCFA is a farmer run association promoting and supporting farming activities which improve soil health. We encourage land managers to be accountable for soil health and strive for increased knowledge of soil management.

(A) Current disincentives that exist for ecologically sustainable land and water use in New South Wales

- Managing for ecological, financial and social goals requires a long to medium term approach. Many extension services and available advice is production and short term focussed.
- There are very few incentives to move focus from short term production goals to long term sustainability
- Lack of knowledge and existing paradigms prevent farmers to look at alternatives.
- Inconsistent advice from advisors and agencies (Extension services are not embracing methods which improve ecology)
- Legislation such as the native veg act is creating negative sentiment and actually contributing to the problem it is aiming to address. The "10 year law" actually encourages farmers to cultivate land every 9 years. Just in case !!
- Cost to change farming methods eg move to no till cropping from conventional cropping requires a machinery conversion or new machinery.
- NHT funding projects require significant amount of time to apply for.

(B) Options for the removal of such disincentives and any consequences doing so;

- Further utilisation of FarmBis targetting more widespread training in natural resource management.
- Lift and broaden skills and knowledge of rural extension officers, continue trend of working with farmers towards common goals, which include environmental outcomes.
- Provide tax or similar Incentives to farmers to manage towards environmental, social and financial goals. Set realistic timeframes for achievement.
- Develop criteria and process to efficiently communicate and manage funding and incentive projects
- Tax incentives for appropriate machinery purchases (cost effective to govt because low number of taxpayers are farmers). Previous incentive scheme was very successful.

Innovative Farmers Have a Future Farming

www.confarming.com

your workshop in the office

July 14, 2003

Page 2

(C) Approaches to land use management on farms which both reduce salinity and mitigate the effects of drought;

The following approaches are working in the Central West –

- No till cropping (minimal soil disturbance and retention of stubble)
- Pasture cropping (growing harvestable annual crops in native perennial pastures)
- Cover cropping (minimal soil disturbance, ground always covered with something growing)
- Planned grazing with perennial grasses and saltbush combined with strategies to match stocking rate to carrying capacity.
- Advance sowing into native pastures (increasing diversity by sowing annual crops for grazing into pastures)

The main benefits of the above approaches are ;

- Effective water, mineral and energy cycles.
- The soil is always covered, never any bare fallows (improving water holding capacity and reducing leakage).
- Soil improvement – capturing rainfall where it falls improving infiltration and reducing runoff therefore erosion.
- Deep rooting perennial pastures and crops keep 100% soil cover 100% of time
- Rising levels of organic carbon in the soil (improves water holding capacity).
- Improved biological status of soil and improved cycling of nutrients.
- Less leaching of nutrients and water to the water table.
- Continual conversion of solar energy to biomass – either edible or harvestable
- Sustainable profits and improving resource base – soil and environment

(D) Ways of increasing the up-take of such land use management practices

- Profiling of successful farmers
- Field Days, farm visits, study tours
- Funded Training
- Benchmarking services which include ecological benchmarks as well as financial
- Financial incentives

(E) The effectiveness of management systems for ensuring that sustainability measures for the management of natural resources in New South Wales are achieved;

We see the following as the characteristics of an effective management system:

- The development of a goal or vision which describes the businesses resource base in the future addressing environmental, financial and social outcomes.
- A decision making process which ensures decisions are moving towards the goal or vision
- The ability to capture, organise and use large amounts of information.
- Disciplines and process to maintain commitment to goal or vision
- The knowledge and skills to run farming enterprises which are measurably effective in achieving the goal or vision

There are many businesses and farming families in NSW who have adopted management systems similar to the one described above. There are several training companies who can train businesses and provide the ongoing support to implement them.

July 14, 2003

Page 3

(F) The impact of water management arrangement on the management of salinity in NSW;

- Healthy soils equate to healthy water systems.
- It can be argued that we only have to stop a small amount of leakage over our catchments to have a huge effect on dryland salinity problem
- The approaches mentioned above in the Central West are proving effective at doing this.

Thanks and regards,



CWCFA Executive Committee

p 02 68466215 (Rick Maurice – Chairman)
e maurice@winsoft.net.au