



Australian  
National  
University



## HEALTHY FARMS, HEALTHY PROFITS & HEALTHY FARMERS

We seek visionary partners committed to sustainable farming. Help to conserve the Australian environment and the natural assets on a farm so farmers and their communities can thrive.

With a growing population, the demand and pressure to increase food and fibre production has never been stronger. Yet the challenges to meeting such demand weigh heavily. Soil erosion, salinity, climate variations, and pest and weed control are just some of a farmer's constant concerns.

These challenges impact the mental health and wellbeing of an already ageing workforce of farmers, with significant implications for the rural communities in which they live. These problems are major concerns for rural Australia and must be addressed.

For two decades, the Australian National University (ANU), has researched and collected data from 350 farmers engaged in sustainable farming from north-east Victoria to south-east Queensland. It is one of the largest, long-term studies of its kind in the world.

These findings can now help all farmers better manage the balance between agricultural production and long-term sustainability, and be more profitable along the way. Farmers who are better environmental stewards have reaped the benefits of their work financially. Many of our farmers not only credit their changed farming practices to surviving the Millennium Drought; they are more profitable.

Testimonials from farmers and their partners demonstrate that the increased presence of vegetation, tree cover, greener pastures and bird calls, has improved their mental health, sense of wellbeing and pride in what they do.

**Healthier farms make for healthier farmers.**

## The Project

ANU will embark on a five-year project to translate 20 years of sustainable farming research into information and tools that farmers can use to better manage their farm's natural capital assets. We will show that a farm that is better managed environmentally is better off financially, and substantially improves a farmer's mental health and wellbeing.

This project will create a range of demonstration farms as well as a suite of communication products and resources that farmers can turn to and easily understand. We aim to change the way farmers view sustainability by showing that it is not only better for them financially but also mentally.

There has never been a more urgent need to address declining biodiversity on Australian farms and to assist farmers in effectively managing their natural capital assets. More than ever, farmers need robust, science-backed and data-driven practices to help their farms ecologically, while maintaining production.

The project aims to have a triple impact on the environment, on farming production and profits, and on the mental health of rural communities.

## The Team

Led by world-leading ecologist, wildlife biologist and conservation scientist, Professor David Lindenmayer from the Fenner School of Environment and Society (FSES) at ANU, the team encompasses leading researchers in environmental science, economics and finance, and mental health. In particular, ANU has teams of field-based research officers that have lived and worked in agricultural landscapes in Gundagai, Tumut, Albury, Wangaratta and Cowra, and who have paddock credibility.

FSES is ranked globally in the top 20 in Environmental Science and Geography, and in the top 10 in Agriculture and Forestry (the highest ranking in Australia). It has a particularly strong track record in researching long-term environment and sustainability issues and challenges. FSES is uniquely placed to deliver this project. No other group in Australia has gathered such extensive, multi-faceted, high-quality empirical datasets over such a prolonged period that will underpin this important and exciting initiative.

## The Partners

This project already has support from:

- > The Ian Potter Foundation
- > Murray and Riverina Local Land Services assisting with field communication, outreach and farmer uptake of new information;
- > Landcare staff who connect with farmers for on-the-ground application of principles and practices;
- > Private landholders of over 350 farms;
- > The Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy (through the Environmental Stewardship Program for which ANU conducts field monitoring);
- > The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources;
- > Greening Australia (via threatened species work);
- > The NSW Department of Environment and Heritage; and
- > Wentworth Group and their work on regional Environmental Asset Accounts.

**To hear more from our participating farmers and team go to: <https://vimeo.com/177640227>**

## Contact

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