

Notes on Sustainable/Regenerative Farming Transition Support

V1

Objective:-

To accelerate the adoption of regenerative/sustainable/resilient agriculture across Australia by supporting the farmers who want to take the journey.

Transition Requirements:-

A key requirement for a successful transition to Regenerative Agriculture is an understanding of what the word means and the key practices involved. An understanding of the principals of Regenerative Agriculture is also a good thing to understand. Without the first two things, there is a danger that you could end-up off track.

The easiest way of achieving the above is to join an existing group that has a track record and like-minded members. That group can be take various shapes and its shape is not as important as its intent and support for its members.

Transition Description

This document from the Menzies Research Centre is, in my opinion, quite a good description of a transition, albeit biased towards earning money from Carbon Credits. Such credits are a bonus and not necessarily the primary reason to adopt regenerative agriculture.

https://www.cv-4h.org/uploads/1/2/3/5/123529351/soil_carbon_from_the_ground_up.pdf

A Definition of Regenerative Agriculture

<https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Environment/Land-Management/Healthy-Landscapes#section-2>

Key Elements of a Regenerative Transition Program

1. Supportive Group of like-minded farmers
2. Vision and objective setting
3. Planning YOUR journey
4. Support and mentorship
5. Education and training
6. Farm visits
7. Advice and help with grants
8. Access to agro-ecologists and other specialist service providers
9. Access to Aboriginal knowledge

Different Types of Support Groups

1. Landcare (Regenerative Grazing and Farming) Groups
2. Council-led groups, such as the one at Byron Shire Council
3. Impromptu Groups, such as Gundaroo Regenerative Land Management Group, run through Facebook
4. Create your own – see below

Research and Support

A number of organisations are undertaking research and offer support across a wide range of farming business dimensions. Some of these in alphabetical order are:-

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1. ANU Sustainable Farms Project (Building biodiversity on farms to improve productivity and build soil organic carbon) - <https://www.sustainablefarms.org.au/>
2. Farming Organisations such as NSW Farmers. Some of these are more regenerative agricultural aware than others.
3. NSW Local Land Services – check whether your local branch supports regenerative agriculture
4. Land To Market (The Highest Level of Integrity for Regenerative Agriculture) - <https://www.landtomarket.com/>
5. Soils For Life (Regeneration of Soils and Landscapes) - <https://soilsforlife.org.au/>
6. Southern Cross University - Farming Together - <https://farmingtogether.com.au/who-we-are/>
7. The Mulloon Institute (Landscape Rehydration) - <https://themullooninstitute.org/>

Structured Programs

Regional Level

Southern Cross University's Regenerative Agriculture Mentorship Program (RAMP) aims to support the growth and development of farmers to become regional champions of regenerative agriculture. See https://www.cv-4h.org/uploads/1/2/3/5/123529351/ramp_brochure.pdf

Local Level

The following is an example of a local program, in this the one being run by Landcare Goulburn Mulwaree:-

1. Soil Improvement Project – see <https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/community-voice-for-hume/goulburn-mulwaree-regenerative-grazing-and-farming-group-soil-improvement-project/>
2. Participation in Regional RAMP – Just started
3. Partnering with:-
 - a. The Mulloon Institute
 - b. ANU Sustainable Farms Project
 - c. Southern Cross University (RAMP)
 - d. ZeroSE – Carbon Sequestration
4. Farm Field Days:-
 - a. with above organisations plus
 - i. Biological Farming Round Table run by Nutrisoil in conjunction with other biological product providers such a Best Farming Systems and independent agroecologists such as David Hardacre

Sources of Grants

to be added

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Ideas for farmer created and driven support group... credit for what is below goes to Michelle Miller, Senior Social Innovator at The Australian Centre for Social Innovation

- GROUP:
 - Peer-based and unstructured, such as Gundaroo Regenerative Land Management Group, based on sharing information through farm visits
 - Coordination support – partners, eg Landcare
 - Dedicated facilitator / mentor
 - Council led, eg Byron Shire
- APPROACH: Defining Regen Ag: principles to guide practices
- DIMENSIONS:
 - principles - extent to which group sets own principles for Regen Ag (boundaries of what's in / what's out) and extent to which group sets self-regulation principles (eg self referee discussion)
 - boots on the ground / practical
 - accountability - extent to which peers hold each other accountable, or are held accountable
 - capability building style and curriculum - expert delivery vs peer sharing, extent to which a curriculum is set and followed
 - leadership - self-organised, self-facilitated vs mentor/leader led
 - co-design - extent to which the group designs their own format curriculum
- SUGGESTED DESIGN:
 - Begin with a speaker presentation, discuss the principles and definition of Regen Ag
 - Every other month - one participant hosts the group at their property to discuss what they're doing to try to regenerate
 - On the alternate month - participants sign up to share something they've learned / found online about Regen Ag and practices, and discuss
 - Go for 10 months
 - Assumption: deliberately start with farmers with a range of practices, OR target groups eg grazing, broad acre, etc