

# Burnett Mary Regional Group working with Federal Government and ANU on 'Australian Farm Biodiversity Stewardship Pilot'

- The Australian Farm Biodiversity Stewardship Pilot aims to pay farmers for biodiversity in combination with planting trees for carbon gains
- The pilot gives farmers the chance to diversify their income and drought proof their businesses
- This will make farm businesses and regional communities more resilient

Farmers in six different trial regions will soon have the chance to diversify their farm income and improve their drought resilience as part of a new Australian Government trial launched today.

Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud said the Carbon+Biodiversity pilot, being delivered under the government's Agricultural Stewardship Package, will see farmers being paid for the biodiversity benefits of mixed-species tree plantings as part of their carbon projects.

"Farmers have been doing biodiversity and carbon work for decades and it's time they were paid for it. They can already participate in carbon markets under the Emissions Reduction Fund, but today we will start trialing a new approach that will also see them paid for the biodiversity benefits they deliver.

"We don't want to lock up land, we want this work to go hand in hand with a productive farming enterprise. Our farmers produce some of the best food and fibre in the world and we want to reward them for delivering positive outcomes for the community, while also improving the financial sustainability of their own farm business.

As part of the pilot, the Australian National University has created the processes and protocols that measure and reward farmers for undertaking the plantings, delivering a system that will be respected by international markets.

ANU Professor Andrew Macintosh said planting blocks or shelterbelts of 20 metres or wider using one of the lists of native plant species created for this pilot would see farmers paid for biodiversity, linked with carbon gains.

"The system delivers rewards for farmers that are achieving measurable biodiversity gains," Professor Macintosh said.

"If planting areas include mature trees, are near watercourses, or provide good habitat for threatened species, this gives the project a higher biodiversity benefit score. If a bushfire comes through and the trees do not naturally regenerate, the farmer is expected to replant but does not need to pay any money back."

Cattle Council CEO Travis Tobin said nearly 80 per cent of Australia's agricultural land is cattle country, and beef producers have indicated biodiversity is a priority for them.

"Cattle Council supports opportunities to diversify farm income while improving on-farm biodiversity.

"This pilot is for producers that want to be rewarded for their environmental work and it respects the producer's right to choose."

Six Natural Resource Management (NRM) regions across Australia have been selected to be included in the pilot: Burnett-Mary (QLD), Central West (NSW), North Central (VIC), North Tasmania (TAS), Eyre Peninsula (SA) and South-west (WA). Regions have been selected, amongst other criteria, to test the program across a range of jurisdictions, farming systems, and vegetation types.

Burnett Mary Regional NRM Group CEO Sheila Charlesworth said her group was thrilled to be part of the pilot.

"We will assist the farmers in our region to be part of this groundbreaking pilot, which will deliver a premium price whilst also rewarding them for protecting our natural resources."

For more details or to apply for the program, please go to  
<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/natural-resources/landcare/sustaining-future-australian-farming>

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