

# Land, Agriculture & Soil Carbon

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AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN  
LAND, AGRICULTURE AND SOIL CARBON  
CLIMATE CHANGE, LAND AND WATER

*The Australian Democrats recognise the importance of the agricultural sector and its significant contribution to the economy, community and to the environment. However with the impacts of climate change, reduced rainfall and seasonal variability is testing the resilience and the viability of the sector. Innovation and support are required for agribusinesses to adapt their current agricultural practices for ongoing productivity and sustainability. This innovation would include efficient infrastructure, drought resistant farm systems and development of new revenue streams and markets such as carbon trading, environmental and energy products. Essential to these actions are improving the understanding of the science, long range forecasts and data so farmers can better manage their businesses.*

*“The negative impact of current land management practices, in particular land clearing, on Australia's emissions is high. There are many ancillary environmental and other benefits such as enhancement of biodiversity, soil conservation and water management, and low cost abatement to be achieved by reducing emissions in this sector”*

***The Heat Is On**  
Senate Environment  
committee report Nov 2000*

## Our Action Plan

- Address **salinity, land and water degradation**, by progressing the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation recommendations.
- Provide long term planning and assistance to agricultural sector to **adapt** agricultural practices **to seasonal variability** associated with drought and climate change.
- Promote and reward **sustainable practices and innovation** which enhance productivity and economic returns to farmers.
- Establish education and extension programs to **support farmers** to better manage for sustainability. Program to include topics such as carbon trading and energy products such as wind farming and biofuels.
- Fund research into **climate change science** and enhance data collection infrastructure.
- Reinstate the **Cooperative Research Centre** for Greenhouse Accounting.
- Fund **research** into; methodologies to value soil carbon for trading purposes; agricultural practices that use less fertiliser and restore soil carbon, and; the impact of climate change on different regions and types of farming activity
- Set up **carbon sequestration trading** by including agriculture, farm forestry and land management in environment markets such as emissions trading.
- **Coordinate, align and integrate** nationally all climate change, natural resources, resource security, environmental sustainability and farm management systems policies.



Other ACTION PLANS are available online at  
[www.democrats.org.au](http://www.democrats.org.au)

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- **Pay land owners** to manage and protect areas of environmental significance on private land and expanded funding by doubling the stewardship programme funding to \$100M.
- Deliver **tax incentives** to protect, promote, manage, rehabilitate, revegetate and enhance **habitat and natural resources**.
- Continue and expand **Landcare** and improve its effectiveness through good science-based strategies and better assist volunteers with training and coordination support.
- **Cease** broad-scale land-clearing in all states.
- Close the loopholes or **toughen quarantine standards** on potential imports of invasive species and disease by requiring Import Risk Assessments undertaken by Biosecurity Australia to be rigorous, transparent, timely and conform to international standards set by World trade Organisation and World Animal Health Organisation.
- Major rural water management and infrastructure (see 'Rural Water' Action Plan).

## The Issues

The current climatic conditions and prolonged drought are unprecedented and it is reducing the capacity of the agricultural sector to adapt and innovate. Climate change and the drought's full effects are yet to be fully appreciated by consumers - simple supply economics mean that prices will be forced up. In the short term there are a lot of difficult policy decisions to be made.

It is in the interest of all Australians that the agricultural industry take appropriate action to reduce the risks and costs associated with climate change and capitalise on the many opportunities for improved sustainability and new environmental markets such as carbon trading.

Sustainable farming practices have the potential to reduce greenhouse emissions while simultaneously increasing productivity, reducing costs, and producing wider natural resource management benefits. These practices include improved crop and grazing land management through improved agronomic practices, nutrient use, tillage, residue management and restoration of degraded land.

In the context of Kyoto Protocol, new strategies and policies within the international framework have been developed for the implementation of agriculture and forestry management practices that enhance carbon sequestration both in biomass and soils. Whether this drought precipitates a change in land use and land use practices, there has to be a profitable and practical alternatives.



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