

"LIME-IT" A SUMMARY

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In southern NSW lime costs are high and income per hectare relatively low. A 2.5 t/ha lime application could cost between 50% and 100% of the annual product value. Farmers must make optimum use of these resources and must address the following questions:

- (i) Is a paddock lime responsive and if so, can we predict the extent of crop, pasture and animal production increase to various amounts of lime applied?
- (ii) What is the long term residual value of lime?
- (iii) Will the farmer make a profit?
- (iv) What will happen if he does not use lime?
- (v) How does the investment compare with alternatives on or off the farm?
- (vi) What is the payback period on a loan required to finance liming costs?

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In order to address these questions, initially for long term sub. clover based pastures, we developed a computer model called "Lime-It". It is designed to be used by advisory professionals (e.g. District Agronomists) sitting down with a farmer (or a small group of farmers) at a micro-computer. The model provides technical and financial information based on farm specific information. The farmer is free to "try out" several options before deciding on the answer which best suits his management goals.

"Lime-It" is made up of four submodels:

- * The soil submodel.
- * The pasture submodel.
- * The livestock submodel.
- * The economic submodel.

It needs technical and economic inputs such as soil pH, CEC and Al levels. The economic information includes gross margins, cost of lime and additional livestock.