

Lime – an important factor in farm business profit in central west New South Wales

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Complex biological, economic and sociological interactions make up a diversified whole farm business. Measuring the degree of influence of the various aspects is extremely difficult.

Some important aspects that contribute to a farm business can be more easily measured on an objective basis. Applying benchmarking methods can assess their contribution and importance. One such example is the application of lime to acid soils.

Over a 3-year period (1997-2000), a group of farmers in central west New South Wales participated in BizCheck[®]. BizCheck[®] is a simple benchmarking tool that allows farm businesses to assess their individual strengths and weaknesses while at the same time comparing the businesses with each other.

Large areas of land in the central west of New South Wales are affected by soil acidity. These acid soils inhibit

the growth of crops and pastures. One effective method of managing such soils is to apply lime to increase the pH of the soil.

Benefits of correcting the soil pH include: a greater choice of pastures and crops, enhanced plant growth, improved availability of soil nutrients, more efficient nutrient uptake and greater soil water utilisation. All these factors help to reduce water tables and thus help to manage dryland salinity.

Farm business income is directly related to the performance of various enterprises. All farm enterprises rely either directly or indirectly on plant growth and therefore ultimately on soil conditions. The use of lime to ameliorate acid soil conditions is an important tool in increasing whole farm profitability.

Table 1: Farm business profit and the % of farm area limed

97/98	98/99	99/00	Average	97/98	98/99	99/00	Average	97/98	98/99	99/00	Average
Low				Middle				High			
Average of the Lowest 25% of businesses				Average of the Highest 25% of businesses							
0%	0%	1%	1%	6%	8%	10%	8%	29%	37%	38%	34%