

## Adding “Carbon Farming for Carbon Trading” to your productive pastures

Louisa Kiely, Director, Carbon Farmers of Australia Pty Ltd

5 Brumbys Run, Clifton Grove NSW 2800 [louisa@carbonfarmersofaustralia.com.au](mailto:louisa@carbonfarmersofaustralia.com.au)

**Abstract:** Carbon farming and trading has been gaining momentum over the past 10 years. Farmers can sell the carbon stored on their land but can then reap the benefits of the stored carbon, such as better water holding capacity, better soil structure and more shade and shelter for livestock.

**Key words:** Carbon farming, soil carbon credits, carbon trading

### Introduction

After more than 10 years gaining momentum, several factors now lead to Carbon Farming and Trading trending to be mainstream.

- Much higher aspirational emissions reduction targets both in Australia and Internationally.
- Recognition in the corporate world of the requirement to show responsible behaviour in the face of the ‘known risk’ of a warming climate
- Willingness of farmers worldwide to diversify income while improving on farm productivity.
- A new and increasing market to bring all the facets together.

There is no need now to explain the ‘co-benefits’ of increased carbon sequestration in both soils and vegetation. These are now well documented – better water holding capacity, better soil structure, better shade and shelter – into drought later, out of drought sooner.

It is the action of increased biomass above and below ground that does this. If you have more and more productive grasses, the act of photosynthesis takes carbon *out* of the air, as they ‘breathe’ in CO<sub>2</sub> and the plant uses the carbon in their own structures and take the carbon down into the soil where microbes use it and over time it is stored in the soil.

So, while agriculture is a high emitter, farmers are also the managers of the *largest* carbon sink – giving agriculture the *best* chance of reducing the effects of climate change. No amount of lowering emissions or changing light bulbs will

reduce the temperature enough – because it is the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere from the last 70 years of emissions which are driving the temperature increase at the moment.

But, what the Carbon Farming Trade Markets can do is ‘value’ these benefits, using CO<sub>2</sub>e as the ‘currency’.

This is due to the happy co-occurrence that as you increase the carbon in soils and vegetation you *also* take that carbon *out* of the atmosphere, assisting to cool the planet.

Another important feature of this market which makes it so appealing is that for the first time, a farmer can sell the product – CO<sub>2</sub>e, *but* keep the benefit on farm – better soil health, better shade and shelter. The ‘product’ never leaves the farm! This should be factored into any gross margin calculations on the benefits of a Carbon Farming Project.

Australia is leading the pack in Soil Carbon Methods *and* Soil Carbon Projects. It is now widely recognised that the soil is the largest carbon sink under our control, with farmers stewarding over 50% of the Land Mass worldwide. It is no wonder then that there is a desire to find the best ways to sequester carbon on farms.

For smaller farmers there is also the potential to ‘pool’ their carbon under an aggregation model. The role of the ‘aggregator’ is to assemble tradable amounts by combining units from several growers. Aggregation can be done well by grower groups e.g. Landcare, Beef or Sheep Groups.

Australia is the first country to sell Paris Agreement compliant Soil Carbon Credits, using multi species pastures to improve the soil

carbon using the approved Soil Carbon method.

We now have the second generation Soil Carbon method, which will offer more flexibility and an easier pathway to developing your Soil Carbon project. In the 2021 budget the federal government allocated \$200 million for the National Soil Strategy, including rebates for farmers who provide soil data.

Carbon Farmers of Australia can assist farmers to understand what is required under a Soil Carbon or Vegetation method, and give you the information you need to make sure such a method is consistent with your farming goals and aspirations.

### References

<https://carbonfarmersofaustralia.com.au/carbon-farming/>

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