

Tuesday, April 11 2017

Carbon, the problem and the solution

We are on the cusp of an uncertain but exciting time in agriculture. Farmers are at the coalface when it comes to climate variability and carbon. However successful business strategies identify threats and apply problem solving to drive opportunity. Could carbon be both the problem and a solution? The research is confirming carbon held in soil is the key to fertility and water holding capacity. It also provides a buffer in times of variability of climate change.

The destruction from recent Tropical Cyclone Debbie exemplifies predictions of increased significant weather events and increased severity of events. Preparation to handle such events has been underway for some time. The [Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Climate Sustainability Plan 2016-2020](#) was a highly collaborative partnership with CISRO, James Cook University and Reef Catchments, thanks to funding through the National Landcare Program. The Plan identifies some of the main risks associated with projected climatic conditions such as predicted temperatures, rainfall and freshwater availability. As well as regional actions, which cover strengthening ecosystem health and biodiversity, community education, risk management and economic sustainability.

The plan also explores the opportunities for farmers to tackle this global problem through local solutions. Not just through increasing their soil carbon asset but strengthening local markets and economies, biodiversity, crop diversification and potential bio-based industries.

Development of adaption resources can be strengthened through farmers' localised observations of the effects of climate variability, given their ongoing relationship with the land. Leaders using best management practice and pushing the boundaries of our current knowledge provide a guide for the other adopters of new farming practices.

Improved farming practices are an unintended consequence of meeting the challenge of climate uncertainty. Reef Catchments is supporting farmers in this time of change through Landcare initiatives in our region.



CAPTION: Simon Mattson presents on soil carbon at the Central Queensland Soil Health Services Soil Health Field Day which is supported by Reef Catchments.

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Media contact: Tegan McBride | 07 4868 4213 | 0438 726 226 | tegan.mcbride@reefcatchments.com