

MEDIA RELEASE



5 December 2018

Soil Snapshot for World Soil Day 2018

Soil Science Australia has released a snapshot of some of the major soil-related issues in each State as part of [World Soil Day](#) on 5 December 2018.

“As you can imagine, Australian soils are incredibly diverse, and factors influencing soil health—including landscape, geology, climate and human activities—all play a role to a greater or lesser extent as our *State Soils Snapshot* shows” said Soil Science Australia President, Associate Professor Luke Mosley.

“The theme of this year’s World Soil Day is stopping pollution of soils. Combating and addressing soil pollution is important to minimise the risks to food security, human health and the environment,” Associate Professor Mosley said.

“Another major concern in Australia is conserving our top soils, especially during extreme weather events like droughts and storms which can cause salinisation, erosion, dust and water quality impacts. We also need improved strategies to enable farmers to increase productivity without degrading our valuable soil resources.

“We hope this State Soils Snapshot, supported by the outcomes of the recent National Soils Conference, will drive greater awareness of soil science and spark more conversations between industry, government, farmers, researchers and local communities on how best to protect Australia’s most precious environmental asset,” he said.

Soil Science Australia State Soils Snapshot 2018

TASMANIA:

HOT ISSUES FOR SOILS: Bushfire impact on peat soils, large-scale irrigation in the Midlands and increased pressure on red ferrosols.

QUOTES attributed to Ms Robyn Doyle, Tasmanian Branch President, Soil Science Australia

“Tasmania is prone to intense bushfires caused by lightning strikes or controlled burns that break containment, particularly in forested areas. This can have a devastating, and sometimes irreparable impact, on our peat soils after a major burn.

“The movement of large-scale irrigation into the ‘Midlands’ onto marginal texture-contrast and aeolian sandy soils for cropping and intensive pasture production is leading to increased compaction, salinity, erosion and nutrient-enriched run-off.

“Red Ferrosols or the deep red friable soils that are intensively farmed in Tasmania are also under increasing pressure from intensive agriculture including dairy operations. Farmers, agronomists and soil scientists must work together with government to ensure we balance important agri-production systems with sustainable soil and land management.”

VICTORIA

HOT ISSUES FOR SOILS: Managing soil nitrogen in dairy regions,

QUOTES attributed to Dr Sam Grover, Victorian Branch President, Soil Science Australia

“Soil issues in Victoria are largely linked to the dairy industry, the largest agricultural industry in Victoria, accounting for more than 65 per cent of annual national milk production.

“Improving soil condition with fertilisers, managing soil nutrient levels, especially nitrogen, and dealing with water resource allocations are critical in sustaining the dairy sector. The equation is pretty simple: the quality and quantity of the milk, comes from the feed and in turn, the soil.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA/NORTHERN TERRITORY

HOT ISSUES FOR SOILS: Salinity, expanding acidity and overcoming soil limitations

QUOTES attributed to Mr James Hall, South Australian Branch President, Soil Science Australia

“In South Australia, it should come as no surprise that salinity tops the list of soil related issues. There are new pockets of salinity on the Eyre Peninsula and in the Mallee on which we need to be keep a careful watching brief and close dialogue with farmers.

“Modern farming techniques mean we can now grow good winter crops which is great for profitability but significantly increases the demand on land that was not traditionally considered that productive.

“South Australia has expanding acidity in valuable cropping lands across the state. We need to encourage and support landowners to overcome soil limitations e.g. how do we best deal with soils, such as clay or sandy soils, that are well below their water use potential?”

QUEENSLAND

HOT ISSUES FOR SOILS: Drought, coal mines, Great Barrier Reef management

QUOTES attributed to Mr Jim Payne, Queensland Branch President, Soil Science Australia

“Queensland is dealing with unprecedented weather events—drought, bushfires, floods—and our soils are bearing the brunt in different ways but all impacting agricultural productivity.

“Rehabilitation of abandoned coal mines across Queensland is incredibly important from a soil science perspective. There is a great deal of work still be done in remediating contamination.

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“The impact of fine sediment run off and the health of the Great Barrier Reef is of significant local and international concern. We must look at solutions to manage top soil erosion on grazing lands and reduce the discharge into waterways which is stressing our precious coral reefs.”

NEW SOUTH WALES/ACT

HOT ISSUES FOR SOILS: Drought

QUOTES attributed to Dr Uta Stockmann, New South Wales Branch President, Soil Science Australia

“The immediate focus for soils in NSW is managing the consequences of the drought. But soil science should be much more than reactive and disaster response—we need to focus on how to better prepare our soils for these extreme conditions and ensure our farmers have the knowledge, skills and resources to better conserve soil water and prepare for the inevitable dry.”

“Soil dryness reduces crop and feed growth and limits runoff for water storage.”

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOT ISSUES FOR SOILS: Salinity, erosion and regenerative agriculture

QUOTES attributed to Mr Tim Overheu, Former Federal President, Soil Science Australia

“Salinity is always the big, obvious issue but given the size of Western Australia, there are a multitude of soil challenges impacting agriculture and the environment

“Managing soil erosion across such a vast landscape is terribly important. Soil mapping will continue to help farmers, particularly in central and southern areas, protect that vital top soil.”

“Capturing the growing interest in regenerative agriculture should have a positive influence on soil health in our state. There is great opportunity to engage with the community, in regional and metropolitan areas, and look at ways of integrating the principles of regenerative agriculture with more conventional farming systems. At the end of the day it’s about delivering the sustainability that the food consumer demands and our environment deserves.”

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