



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**31 July 2024**

### **Continued Funding for Soil Health supports farmers and communities on ground**

The eight Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs have welcomed the Australian Government's announcement of grant funded soil health projects through the Natural Heritage Trust's \$302.1 million Climate-Smart Agriculture Program. This investment includes a \$6.26 million commitment to continue the national network of Regional Soils Coordinators who support the delivery of integrated and targeted soils services to farmers and communities, broker partnerships with industry and stakeholders and provide networks for researchers, primary producers, First Nations peoples and community groups to work together.

Speaking on behalf of the eight Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs, Professor David Phelps, Director of the Tropical North Queensland Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (TNQ Drought Hub) said the funding extension was significant as it would enable the universities and grower group to maintain their Regional Soils Coordinators, who have played a pivotal role in promoting soil health and climate-smart sustainable agriculture approaches across Australia.

"The role of the eight Regional Soils Coordinators is essential for addressing the unique agricultural challenges faced by farmers and landholders in each region.

"The Regional Soils Coordinators are hosted through the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs, which are closely linked to universities, grower groups, and natural resource management groups. This allows for a coordinated national approach.

"This network will focus on the sustainability of soils, agricultural productivity, and addressing local issues, delivering outcomes for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program and ultimately, supporting the National Soil Strategy goals of prioritising soil health and strengthening soil knowledge and capability.

TNQ Regional Soils Coordinator, Dhiraj Gajera, said the funding will enable them to build on the work they have started across the regions to promote soil health and its critical role in agricultural productivity and sustainability.

"Our role as Regional Soils Coordinators is to look after the soils because, globally, we face two major challenges: food security and climate change. Soil health is central to addressing these issues.

"We shouldn't forget that ninety-five per cent of our food comes from the soil and soil organisms, not from the supermarket.



“By working closely with growers, graziers, land managers and extension providers, we aim to increase awareness and knowledge about the importance of soil health and encourage best practices. Because healthy soil leads to healthy food, which leads to healthy people and a healthy country.”

Stephen Lee, Director of the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (SA Drought Hub) said “The collaboration between the Drought Hubs as well as the soil coordinators provides real on-farm practical benefits that farmers can adopt for sustainable land management practices, whilst also improving economic returns.”

For more information visit <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/natural-resources/landcare/climate-smart>

ENDS

*The Regional Soils Coordinators are supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program under the Natural Heritage Trust.*