

# Soil Health Update

September 2009

This newsletter is going out to all people who subscribed to the Soil Stamina days or have asked to be included to receive information on soil health.

*The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the latest information on Soil Health, recent events, demonstration farms and upcoming events.*

## A day with Maarten Stapper

<b>When</b>	Thursday 29th October
<b>Where</b>	Silvester Oval, Football Club Rooms, Coleraine.
<b>What</b>	A day with Maarten Stapper - (as seen on Australian Story) see overleaf for more details
<b>Time</b>	10.00am to 4.30pm (morning tea and lunch provided)
<b>Cost</b>	<b>\$20 non members</b> <b>\$10 members</b> You can sign up for membership on the day and receive the reduced rate. Booking is essential! Numbers are limited.
<b>RSVP Essential</b>	<b>Please RSVP by Monday 26th October to;</b> Gill or Ian Fry, Phone: 5573 4539 Mobile: 0429 700911 Email: <a href="mailto:ian.fry@networksw.com.au">ian.fry@networksw.com.au</a>

### Dr Maarten Stapper

Dr Maarten Stapper has an Agricultural Engineering Degree from the Netherlands, in farming systems and catchment management in semi-arid tropics. He did his PhD with the University of New England, Armidale, on wheat production systems.

The main focus of Maarten's work is helping farmers improve the profitability of their operations by harnessing the power of natural soil processes, improving their use of inputs and understanding those practices that negatively impact on soil health. A healthy soil produces better crops & pastures, requiring less fertilisers and agro-chemicals for similar productivity, and resulting in healthier feed for animals and healthier food for humans.



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# Biological Farming and Healthy Soils Workshop

## Dr Maarten Stapper - Farming Systems Agronomist

- See the importance of living things in soils to increase soil carbon, productivity and improving environmental outcomes of farming in a bio-diverse landscape.
- Learn reasons for soil degradation and its remediation, eg. structure, erosion, salinity.
- See how to take achievable steps to improve your soil biology.
- Find out roles of humus (stable soil carbon) in creating soil balance and efficient use of water
- How can you make your plants more drought tolerant?
- What do weeds tell you? Learn more about effective weed control, with or without herbicides.
- Create internal plant resistance to insects and diseases – how can you stop using insecticides and fungicides without losing yield?
- See the role of soil biology in nutrient storage, availability and uptake.
- Find out how biological farming improves food and feed quality.
- How can healthy soils improve the health of stock and humans?
- Find out how to stop reliance on (expensive) synthetic chemicals and fertilisers.
- Learn how healthy farming systems reduce risks and lead you to peace of mind.
- In paddock walk learn what to look for as indicators of soil health.
- How to start?

This workshop is for anyone using soil to grow plants and covers the ins and outs of creating and maintaining healthy soils through biological farming practices with examples of achieved successes.

Current soil problems are the result of gross oversimplification of fertilization and 'plant protection' practices that use harsh fertilizers and chemicals while ignoring the delicate balance of carbon, microbes, trace minerals and nutrients in the soil.

To regenerate soils and to stop all factors degrading soils, we have to look at how farm practices affect the ecosystem, that is, the soil/flora/fauna in the landscape - where every thing is linked to everything else. This leads to the practices of biological farming.

The focus on biological farming is to help farmers to improve the profitability of their operations by harnessing the power of natural soil processes, improving their use of inputs, creating healthy soils and understanding those practices that negatively impact on soil health.

A healthy soil produces better crops and pastures, requiring less fertilisers and agro-chemicals for similar productivity, plants developing internal resistance to insects and diseases, plants becoming more drought and frost tolerant, and providing healthier, mineral denser feed and food. Biological agriculture leads to higher biodiversity on farms and greatly reduced impact of farming on catchments.

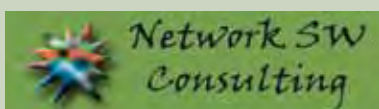
Biological farming can improve soil carbon ten times faster and to higher levels than under current farming practices where nitrogen fertilizers and herbicides limit the carbon storage (sequestration) as humus. Higher soil carbon increases productivity and helps slowing climate change. Healthy, biologically active, living soils can adjust to a changing climate and remain more productive.

Organic farming can be attained profitably from current practice in transition through a period of biological farming during which the soil is balanced and weed problems are reduced.

For future information:

Email: [maarten@BioLogicAgFood.com.au](mailto:maarten@BioLogicAgFood.com.au)

Website : <http://BioLogicAgFood.com.au>



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# Soil Health Group Update



The Caring for our Country Government funding finished on August 30th 2009. When the funding finished, the demonstration farmers were keen to go on with the project and continue to monitor their soils. The trial had really only just begun!

The farmers met and decided to formally incorporate the group and called it the 'Soil Health Group'.

The purpose of the group is;

- To create awareness, understanding and further improve skills of farmers in soils and soil management through events, such as field days, so that they will be farming sustainably for the future
- To demonstrate the effects of the pasture treatments through monitoring soil, pastures and grazing days on three demonstration farms
- To communicate and create awareness of soil health to the wider audience through the media, journal articles, newsletters and the website.

At the first meeting the following were elected to the office bearing positions;

**President:** Warwick Brown.

**Secretary:** Bill Stonnill

**Treasurer:** Gary Gebert

**Public Officer:** John Kane



L to R: Warwick Brown, John Kane, Gill Fry, Ian Fry, Maarten Stapper, Gary Gebert, Robyn Gebert and Bill Stonnill

The Soil Health Group also selected Gill Fry from Network SW Consulting to be the Executive Officer as Gill had been an integral part of setting up and delivering the Soil Stamina project.

Over the coming year, the Soil Health Group plan to run a Maarten Stapper day on October 29th, run another event in Autumn and run informal member BBQ/farm walks throughout the year.

Membership is only \$40 per family for the year and entitles you to;

- 4 newsletters a year,
- Advanced notice of upcoming events, (especially important as we had 50 people on our waiting list for our last event!)
- Discount to events,
- Vote at the Annual General meeting
- Participation in informal members farm walks and BBQ's

A membership form is attached to this newsletter. You can either send it by post at least a week before the Maarten Stapper event so you can register as a member on the day - or bring along your filled out form on the day and you will still receive the discount rate.

This group is a not for profit group and relies on funding to continue the good work on raising the awareness and understanding of soil health. We hope you will join us.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future, please contact Gill Fry, P: (03) 5573 4539 E: [gill.fry@networksw.com.au](mailto:gill.fry@networksw.com.au)

For further information on soils, check out the networksw website. It is updated frequently and there will be even more information coming soon

