



## The Peak Body for the Australian Organic Sector

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*From the desk of:*

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **Soil Carbon Scheme Could Offset all of Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions** ***The OFA welcomes the announcement of a Carbon Credit scheme for farmers***

'A Soil Carbon Offset Scheme has the potential to sequester all of the 537 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that Australia emits and generate \$70 billion in Carbon Credit payments to the Australian economy.' Andre Leu, Organic Federation of Australia Chair stated.

'Long term scientific farming comparison trials show that organic systems sequestered an average of 7.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year into the soil.'

'If Australia's land managers could sequester an average of 7.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year into the soil of our 473 million hectares of agricultural land, that would equate to 3.5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered.' Mr Leu said.

'This is almost 7 times the 537 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that was emitted in Australia in 2009 and would generate \$70 billion in Carbon Credit payments to farmers and graziers at the current price.'

'Just sequestering 1.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year would make Australia greenhouse gas neutral. This means that land managers can take 80 years to have a 1% increase in soil organic carbon and is achievable for most organic land managers. Many areas can achieve significantly higher rates of sequestration and this should more than compensate for lower rates in other areas.' Andre stated.

'The OFA is currently running Australian Government funded workshops around the country to teach farmers how to adapt these methods to their farming systems so that they can sequester CO<sub>2</sub> into the soil.' Tim Marshall, OFA Deputy Chair said.

'The current price per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> on most Carbon/Climate Exchanges is around \$20. Good organic farmers and graziers could earn around \$150 per hectare per year on top of the money that they earn from their crops and livestock. This will be useful income for most farmers.' Tim stated.

'Scientific comparison studies show that organic systems are the most effective land management systems to store terrestrial carbon.' said Mr Marshall.

'Investing in research on the best ways to adapt these organic practices to Australia's agricultural lands would be one of the fastest ways to reduce greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change. Furthermore, after years of neglect, serious funding is needed into organic research and development to improve the current practices.' Dr Els Wynen, Deputy Chair stated.

The OFA held Australia's first National Conference on Farming and Climate Change in 2006 and has been actively advocating for carbon credits for soil carbon.

**-ENDS-**

The Organic Federation of Australia is the peak body for the organic sector. For further information please visit [www.ofa.org.au](http://www.ofa.org.au) The OFA will help consumers identify genuine organic products during Trust Organic from August 19 to Sept 05 2010

**For Interviews:**

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La Salle, T. and Hepperly, P. (2008), Regenerative Organic Farming: A Solution to Global Warming, The Rodale Institute 611 Siegfriedale Road Kutztown, PA 19530-9320 USA

Pimentel D et al (2005), Environmental, Energetic and Economic Comparisons of Organic and Conventional Farming Systems, Bioscience (Vol. 55:7), July 2005

Rodale (2008) Farm Systems Trial, The Rodale Institute 611 Siegfriedale Road Kutztown, PA 19530-9320 USA

These long term scientific farming comparison trials show that organic systems sequestered an average of 7.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year into the soil over a 22 year period.

**Back of the envelope calculations:**

In total, the area of Australian agricultural land is 473 million hectares or nearly 62 percent of the continent.  
<http://www.anra.gov.au/topics/land/landuse/index.html#use>

7.4 tonnes per hectare X 473 million hectares = 3.5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered

According to the Department of Climate Change: 'In the twelve months to December 2009, Australia's emissions were an estimated 537 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e (million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent)'  
<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/en/climate-change/emissions.aspx>

Data shows that correct grazing tends to increase soil carbon faster than cropping systems – even in semi arid and arid areas. Most grazing is done in these areas around the world.

7.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year is a very small increase. According to Dr Christine Jones's figures a 1% increase in soil organic carbon is the equivalent of 88 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered.

This rate would take around 12 years to get a 1% increase. This is achievable under good organic grazing and cropping management systems.

Australian land managers only need to sequester 1.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year to be GHG neutral. (537 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e divided by 473 million hectares = 1.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>)

This means that land managers can take 80 years to have a 1% increase in soil organic carbon. This is achievable for most organic land managers. Many areas can achieve significantly higher rates of sequestration and this should more than compensate for lower rates in other areas.