

- *At the Wodonga-based NutriSoil Annual Open Day guest speaker Dr Julian Hill from the University of Melbourne addressed the 170 visitors for about an hour.*

How the worm turns on biological farming

By Natasha Sherwood

FARMERS converged on NutriSoil's annual field day last week – after all, the informed bird gets the worm.

The Wodonga-based vermiculture business, which produces liquid biological fertiliser, hosted about 170 farmers at the fourth annual event.

Pasture and cropping farmers came from as far as Port Lincoln in South Australia for the intensive day of learning.

Even an exchange student from France was all ears about the product and the benefits of biological farming discussed.

Dr Julian Hill from the Melbourne School of Land and Environment at the University of Melbourne made a presentation on sustainable pasture for ruminant production.

NutriSoil director Rachelle Armstrong said Dr Hill covered many topics in his hour-long presentation.

Mrs Armstrong said Dr Hill was not afraid to study areas that weren't well funded – such as vermiculture which involves the farming of worms.

He had made a vermiculture product that produced consistently larger root systems.

"They don't as a university go out and test commercial products," Mrs Armstrong said.

However, she said NutriSoil had produced similar results.

Dr Hill also talked about better funded research areas such as carbon sequestration.

He spoke about ways farmers might be able to sequester carbon in the future.

His advice to farmers was not to get too worried about the whole topic.

Dr Hill said carbon sequestration improved soils and productivity anyway – so focus on that.

Mrs Armstrong said Dr Hill's presentation was a highlight of the event.

However, he wasn't the only feature of the field day.

"We showcased a film we had put together," she said.

"And all afternoon we had different farmers talking about biological farming and their results using NutriSoil.

"That's what people really enjoy – being able to hear from real farmers."

After the presentations the speakers again took to the front of the room to form a panel and answered questions on the day's proceedings from farmers.