

Farmers know best

By Rachele Maddock

COSTS of farming keep increasing at the same rate as productivity gains or faster!

Not only are fuel prices pushing farmer's production costs higher, but many farmers are also tiring of the rising levels and costs of inputs going onto their land.

More artificial nutrients, more pesticides, more herbicides yet is production increasing... are our soils improving?

Are we getting the balance right... are we going to leave the land to the next generation in as good or better state than when we started farming it?

As food producers, are we taking responsibility for the quality and safety of what we produce?

Graham Maddock of Yackandandah has been a pioneer farmer in this area having used only vermiculture (worm) based products made on the family farm for over 12 years.

No conventional fertilizers or pesticides have been applied in this period.

He has spent many years perfecting the

development of a vermiculture-based product called NutriSoil.

He has been marketing NutriSoil for approximately eight years and has found an appreciative market among fellow farmers where good yields and quality are desired.

The family business has grown considerably since humble beginnings eight years ago.

A field day held on the property recently attracted over 180 farmers from across NSW and VIC.

Existing clients spoke of using NutriSoil in place of nitrogen fertilisers.

They reported being able to maintain productivity and save money while improving soil health.

In so many areas of life, we can see the benefits of scientific advancement, however in agriculture it seems that the common direction of scientific research is telling us to become more reliant

on increasing so-called better inputs on the land.

However, farmers still see inexplicable differences in response between paddocks and years, with some farmers rejecting conventional advice and returned to natural farming techniques supporting cycles of nature (biological farming).

In biological farming, more attention is being turned to the health of soil and soil biology (life in the soil) rather than just looking at plants as an indicator.

The farmers I refer to are not necessarily certifying themselves organic.

They are finding that working with nature to increase the diversity of soil organisms can actually increase yields in pasture/crop and improve stock health and quality.

These results are helping to eradicate ideas that natural farming methods result in decreased production.

Another surprising result has been the

decrease in pest attack and improvement in weed control when adequate numbers and diversity of species are supported, and added to soils if needed.

The list of benefits goes on, associated with more carbon entering the soil – better soil structure as micro-organisms help to build aggregates, better root growth and water retention due to naturally aerated soils by these organisms.

There has been a groundswell amongst farmers to educate themselves on soil biology and biological farming and a handful of brave scientists are willing to challenge conventional science and work with farmers to help them understand the amazing results they are getting when attending to soil health.

For information on biological farming and NutriSoil check out the website nutrisoil.com.au or contact via email enquiries@NutriSoil.com.au or phone 02 6020 9676.