

Understanding the soil resource to effectively manage and build a healthy soil, not degrade it

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Healthy soils are fundamental to rural living and food production. Maintaining healthy soils is essential for farmers and land managers in north central Victoria to support productive agricultural industries, contribute to food security and deliver soil related ecosystem services. For farmers or rural property owners soil is their most valuable asset. It provides structural support, water and nutrient for plant growth.

Understanding soil types, applying the appropriate management practices and monitoring soil quality are all important steps in protecting and enhancing soil health.

The newly developed Soil Health Guide for north central Victoria builds on the principles of the Visual Soil Assessment and is an easy-to-read, practical guide to understanding soil types in north central Victoria. The guide provides information to help identify possible soil health issues using nine simple visual soil tests conducted in the paddock. Observations and results can be used to determine management actions to improve soil health and assess differences in soil health between paddocks, farms, management practices and/or growing seasons. The guide aims to complement laboratory test results, providing real-time information on a soil physical, chemical and biological characteristic.

The tool will act as a capacity building tool for sustained and effective engagement in sustainable agriculture across the north central region. Delivery will be collaborative through the Australian Government's Regional Landcare Facilitator role, North Central CMA and in partnership with the Victorian State Government and distributed to a targeted audience. The tool will be consistently used as a value add to current and new soil extension programs across the north central region, act as a key soil health learning resource, foster partnerships between industry, government, individuals and community groups, be evaluated to provide an opportunity for continual improvement in tool and content and embedded across land health programs within the north central region of Victoria.