

Dry and harsh land inspires Parkesbourne farmer Craig Hunt to look towards regeneration and improving soil quality



By [Sophie Bennett](#)

Updated May 3 2022 - 4:26pm, first published 2:45pm

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Whatsapp](#)[Email](#)



Craig Hunt's family own 600 acres of farming land. Photo: Supplied.

Craig Hunt's family has been farming in Parkesbourne for more than 150 years, now working with his son Shayne, the tradition lives on.

What Mr Hunt wants to change however, is his method of farming. "After the 2019 bushfires the ground just looked so dead and dry and harsh," Mr Hunt said.

"I started thinking about how we could help the ground retain more water to increase ground cover and not let the earth get so bare again."

Mr Hunt's curiosity led him to a range of podcasts including Nutrition Farming, Regenerative Agriculture and Biological Farming Round Table.

He said during his research he came across statistics that showed there may only be around 60 harvests left at the current rate soils were degrading. Having since developed a strong interest in regenerative farming, Mr Hunt is now using two hectares of his land to experiment with how to best improve soil quality.

According to a factsheet produced by Zero SE, a citizen's alliance dedicated to reducing carbon emissions to zero in South East NSW, the municipal of Goulburn Mulwaree produces 688,000 tonnes of CO₂.

Agriculture makes up 18 per cent of these emissions however, improving soil health allows more moisture to be held in the ground which in turn promotes deeper plant roots and helps sequester more carbon.

Mr Hunt's project seeks to improve biological activity in the soil through the use of beneficial agents while reducing the use of synthetic fertiliser and herbicide.

The ultimate goal is to completely remove the use of chemicals over 12 months.

Products from Nutrisoil and Best Farming Systems, a Goulburn company, will be used to kick-start and grow soil biology.

NutriSoil is a concentrated worm liquid and Best Farming Systems sell TM Agriculture, an organically certified biostimulant that primarily consists of a variety of plant extracts, arcadian seaweed, molasses and fish meal.

Currently, the soil biology is severely damaged due to the overuse of a particular herbicide and the numerous times the land has been ploughed. Mr Hunt primarily grazes prime lambs on his property and grows fodder.

For the project the land will be divided into 11 plots, including two control plots which will have no chemical fertilisers, Nutrisoil or TM Agriculture added.

The rest of the plots will have varying amounts of synthetic fertiliser added as well as Nutrisoil and TM Agriculture.

The project is now well underway, seeds were sown on March 28 with the intention to create a multi-species coverage.

The seeds included oats, chicory, field peas, brassica, radish, plantain, white turnip, lupins, fescue, phalaris, white clover, red clover and three different types of sub clover.



The multi-species coverage includes oats, chicory, field peas, brassica, radish, plantain, white turnip, lupins, fescue, phalaris, white clover, red clover and three different types of sub clover. Photo: Supplied.

The success of the project will be judged by comparing the results of the non-control plots with the control plots.

Landcare Goulburn Mulwaree and the Regenerative Grazing and Farming Group are supporting the project and are in the process of hiring a project coordinator.

While not a rigorous scientific experiment, Mr Hunt plans to conduct annual soil tests for at least three years.

"It's a long term project that I'll continue to monitor," he said