

Media Release

Carbon farming increases drought resilience, according to national survey by Charles Sturt University

The environmental and financial benefits of carbon farming activities make farmers more drought resilient, according to a national survey conducted by Charles Sturt University.

Nearly three-quarters of farmers questioned on the impacts of carbon farming activities said they were better prepared for drought, used the extra income to meet their mortgages and were able to reinvest in their properties, reducing the severity of drought.

As a result, those engaged in carbon farming were less stressed than those who weren't, even though most carbon farmer respondents came from more drought-impacted regions.

The survey of 120 farmers, enabled by a grant from the Federal Government's Future Drought Fund (FDF), was conducted in late 2021 and early 2022 with most participants from NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Eighty survey respondents were engaged in carbon farming or carbon farming activities, using one or more methods including soil carbon, regeneration and plantings.

Charles Sturt University's Emily Webster, who led the research, says the results clearly show farmers and the environment are benefiting either through projects that generate Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) or through land management improvements from carbon farming activities.

"For those earning revenue from carbon farming, it allowed them to improve their properties, such as creating feed reserves and stock containment areas while servicing farm debt. The additional income also gave many farmers the confidence to de-stock and re-stock early," said Ms Watson.

"Farmers engaged in carbon farming activities also reported greater drought resilience, with better soil health, more water retention and less erosion leading to faster regrowth of ground cover once the dry was over."

Roger Sendall, who runs a 6,500 hectare sheep and cropping operation west of Narrabri in north west NSW has experienced first-hand the drought-proofing effect of carbon farming.

"During an earlier drought, we nearly went broke just from feeding sheep and the stock really suffered. We had to change. By focusing on carbon cycling practices, our property is now holding more water. We handled the drought a lot better due to carbon farming. It's simply good agricultural practice."

Skye Glenday, Co-CEO of major carbon farming service provider Climate Friendly, says drought resilience is a striking benefit of carbon farming.

"Drought periods have a significant impact on the well-being and financial security of agricultural producers around Australia," says Ms Glenday.

"We have observed the benefits of carbon farming in periods of drought across 150 projects we support, but it's great to have these confirmed through this national survey. Revenue earned through carbon farming projects is helping our partners prepare for and survive drought and recover quickly afterwards."

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