



# Strategic *Plan*

2023-2025



# About us

Soils for Life is an independent, non-profit organisation that works to support Australian farmers to regenerate soils, for resilient people, communities, businesses and landscapes. We are an energetic and passionate team of soil scientists, agroecologists, researchers, and communications and engagement specialists. Our work is possible thanks to the generosity of donors and grant-makers, and the commitment of our network of farmers.



## Why soil?

Soil is one of the earth's most important natural resources. Without soil, life as we know it would simply not be possible. Soil is the foundation of all natural systems. It enables plants to grow, provides habitat for the planet's countless species, produces clean water and plays a crucial role in regulating our climate.

Unfortunately, soils around Australia have been degraded and in many places are continuing to degrade.

**The emerging concept of 'soil security' ... underpins the world's six existential challenges: food, water and energy security, climate change abatement, biodiversity protection and human health. I believe that soil and water security will increasingly underpin global social stability and security.**

— Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery AC AO, Soils for Life founder and Australia's inaugural National Soils Advocate





## Regenerative agriculture

Leading farmers in Australia and around the world have shown that it is possible to farm in ways that not only reduce environmental impacts, but actually build and improve the function of soil and other natural systems.

At Soils for Life, we use the term 'regenerative agriculture' to describe any system of principles, practices and decision-making processes that effectively rebuild soil and landscape diversity and function through agriculture. A 'regenerative' approach to agriculture aims to rehabilitate, enhance and work with – rather than against – ecosystem processes, placing a premium on soil health.

## Our impact

Since our founding in 2013, we have put soil on the national agenda, and driven the growing movement towards regenerative approaches to agriculture.

Our more than 50 world-leading case studies have uncovered the stories of the pioneers of regenerative farming in Australia, and inspired farmers around Australia and the world to become better stewards of the land and the soil.

In 2021, the Federal Government released Australia's first ever National Soil Strategy, an achievement to which Soils for Life is proud to have contributed. We are now turning our attention to supporting the next wave of Australian farmers to regenerate the nation's precious soils and landscapes.



# Our mission

Our mission is to support Australian farmers to regenerate soils, for resilient people, communities, businesses and landscapes.

We are working to realise a world where healthy, regenerated soils and landscapes support profitable food-producing businesses, thriving and resilient people and regional communities, and abundant and nutritious food.



# Our theory *of change*

Unlike a decade ago, building soil health through regenerative farming approaches is no longer a fringe idea. Increasing numbers of farmers are looking to soil regeneration as a solution, having seen the benefits that healthy soils have brought to leading farmers around the country.

However, there is a wide gap between interest and action. Changing practices involves risk and requires investment – of time, energy and money. Farmers need support to get to the point where they have confidence to take those risks and make those investments.

In the years ahead, we will focus on building this confidence, to remove barriers and smooth the path for the next cohort of regenerative farmers. We believe that providing farmers with the knowledge, skills and supporting social infrastructure they need to lead a national effort to rebuild and restore soils will strengthen Australia's response to climate change while enabling the production of healthy, plentiful food and fibre in ways that are good for farmers, communities and the planet.

# Our strategy

Our work is guided by five **strategic pillars**.

**Pillars 1–3** are focused on direct, on-ground support for farmers, through sharing examples, creating opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing, and building farmers' capacity to take their own soil health measurements and observations, so they can trial and adapt their practices over time.

**Pillar 4** focuses on using everything we learn from our on-ground work with farmers to inform system-level decision making and drive system-level change.

**Pillar 5** focuses on the health and function of our organisation.



# Soils for Life Strategic Pillars



## Pillar 4

**National momentum** for system change



### Pillar 1

**Empowering stories**  
speaking to all  
farmers



### Pillar 2

**Peer communities**  
available to all  
farmers



### Pillar 3

**Soil monitoring**  
supporting farmer-  
led innovation



## Pillar 5

**High functioning organisation** set up to  
deliver great work with minimum hassle



## Pillar 1. Empowering stories of soil stewardship

### *Outcome*

Holistic examples of soil and landscape regeneration are empowering farmers of all kinds around Australia to build confidence to adopt regenerative approaches to agriculture.

### *Strategies*

- Appeal to a wide audience of farmers by producing diverse case studies to cover a wide range of geographies, enterprise types and social contexts.
- Provide practical information by producing thematic groups of case studies illustrating how farmers operating in different contexts have tried similar approaches to soil regeneration.
- Share the lessons of these case studies widely by helping the case study farmers to tell their stories and share their insights in a wide range of ways, both digital and face-to-face.

“ It was reading the Soils for Life producer profiles that helped build my confidence to farm in an eco-friendly way ... Soils for Life has been a catalyst and is an ongoing driver of a revolution in Australian agriculture.

— Case study farmer





## Pillar 2. Peer communities for soil regeneration

### *Outcome*

Peer-to-peer soil regeneration learning communities are available to all farmers around Australia, and are providing support for adoption of regenerative approaches to farming.

### *Strategies*

- Utilise case studies as the foundation for thematic peer learning communities.
- Work with on-ground partners, especially NRMs and Landcare, adding value to their existing networks by facilitating soil-specific peer learning and capacity building, including access to our national and international networks of leading farmers and soil and agroecological specialists.
- Utilise world-leading digital communications and engagement strategies to provide access to genuine peer learning opportunities for geographically dispersed farmers.



As soon as you get farmers together who are like-minded and who are trying to find answers to the same challenges ... you'll find that we all really open up. It makes you far more likely to put things into action.

When you Google, you get a lot of information and opinion without verification. When we talk here, we know someone has actual experience behind what they say, and we can get the story of how they arrived at what they do now.

— Peer learning participants





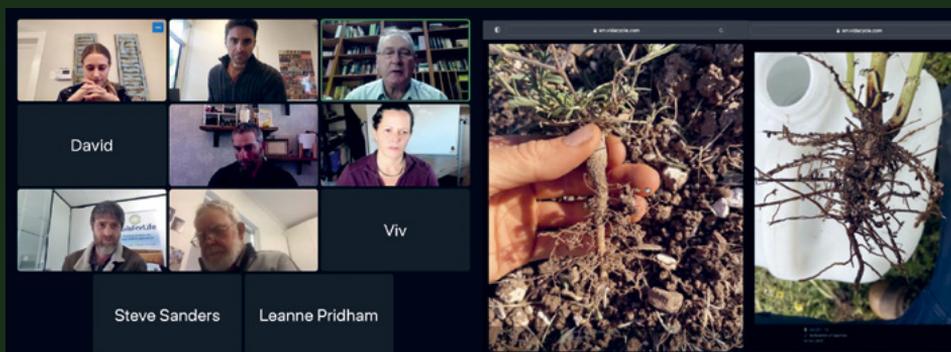
## Pillar 3. Soil health monitoring

### Outcome

All farmers have ready access to the knowledge, skills and support networks to monitor and observe soil health and functionality over time, in order to support adaptation and innovation in land management practices.

### Strategies

- Develop farmer-led soil health monitoring resources and make these freely available through a range of digital and on-ground/in-person communications and engagement channels.
- Create zero cost digital spaces where farmers can seek and receive encouragement and assistance from both peers and soil specialists to help them undertake soil health monitoring and make informed land management decisions based on this monitoring.



Supporting farmers to collect their own observations and data allows them to make real-time management decisions based on a deeper understanding of soil health.

— James Diack, Farmer Engagement Manager



## Pillar 4. Building national momentum

### *Goal*

Support for farmer-led soil and landscape regeneration is growing within the general community, amongst government policy makers, and researchers, and translating into increasing policy, research and community support for farmer soil stewardship.

### *Strategies*

- Provide opportunities for farmers in our network to demonstrate leadership and influence the general community, government policy makers and researchers.
- Produce exceptional communications and events that build public awareness of the opportunity that farmer-led soil regeneration offers.





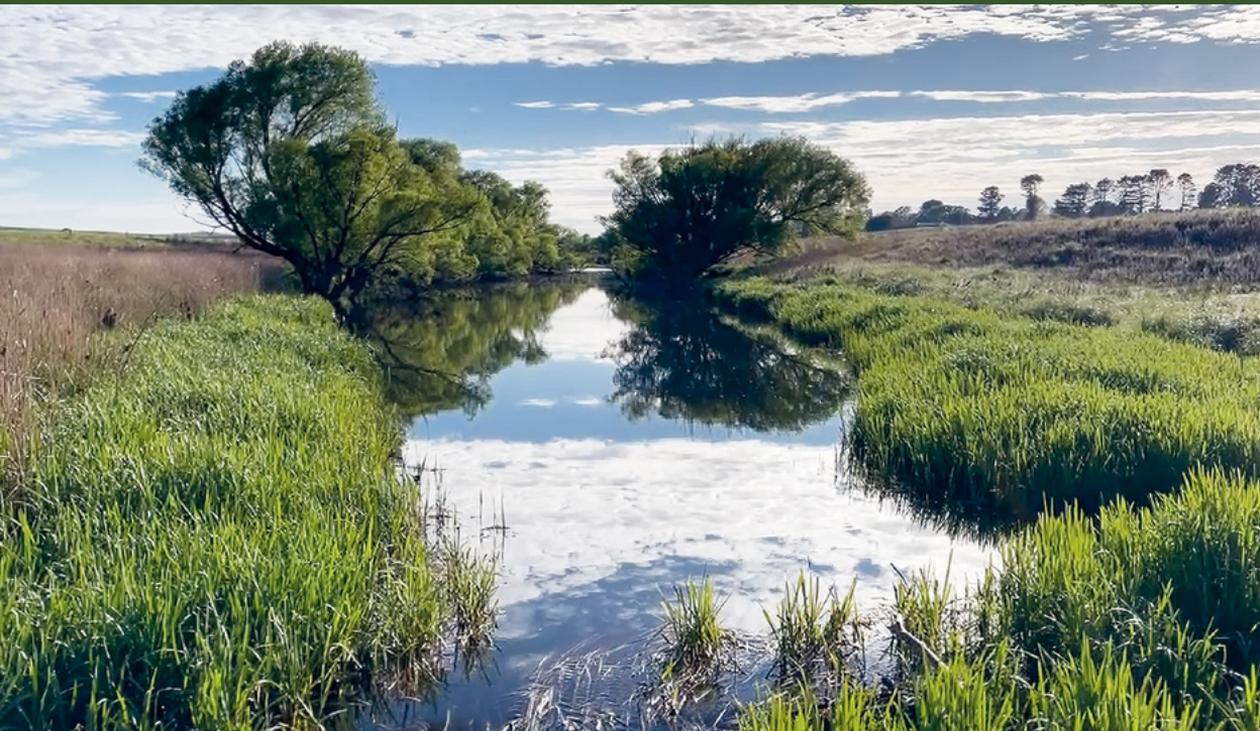
## Pillar 5. Organisational foundations

### *Goal*

Soils for Life is a thriving organisation that is widely regarded as a trusted and constructive partner, with a happy team consistently delivering high quality and impactful work.

### *Strategies*

- Diversify Soils for Life's sources of funding.
- Build strategic and mutually beneficial partnerships, especially with Landcare groups and NRM organisations, and make the most of existing partnerships and relationships with government, research and industry.
- Provide a safe, inclusive, flexible, fun and high performing working environment for our team, underpinned by excellent operational policies and processes.



# How we work

Soils for Life takes a collaborative approach to our work that puts the farmers we work with, and our partners, at the centre. We prioritise humility, constructiveness and credibility in all we do and say.

Our organisational values guide all of our work:

**We see soil as a fundamental resource** that underpins our food system and makes all life on earth possible.

**We value farmers' knowledge** and capacity for innovation, and aim to complement and support this.

**We take care to ensure that our work is credible**, informed by the best available science while recognising that soil science is rapidly evolving.

**We take a holistic approach** that values people and communities, the environment and the economy.

We **support Australian farmers**  
to *regenerate soils and landscapes.*

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