

Strategic Plan

2026–2029



SoilsforLife

About Soils for Life

Supporting Australian farmers

Soils for Life is an independent, non-profit organisation that works to support Australian farmers and producers to regenerate soils, for resilient people, communities, businesses and landscapes. We are an energetic and passionate team of soil specialists, agroecologists, researchers, agricultural educators and communications and engagement specialists.



Our vision is a world where healthy soils and functional landscapes sustain thriving regional communities, a secure supply of nutritious food and resilient agricultural enterprises for generations to come.

Our mission is to inspire and support a critical mass of Australian farmers and producers to adopt approaches to agriculture that regenerate soils and landscapes.

What makes us unique

Our national and international network of farmers and advisers: We have strong relationships with a wide network of leading regenerative and soil health focused farmers and advisers across Australia and beyond.

Trust and accessibility: We are open-minded and focused on relationships, communicating in a way that is inclusive and pragmatic. We provide the most trusted and credible services and resources to aspiring regenerative farmers at low or zero cost. We are experts in supporting farmers to engage with the complexity of regenerative soil and land management without becoming overwhelmed.

Curated pathways to adoption: Our offerings are designed to support adoption by meeting farmers where they're at, providing both motivation and practical guidance, working nationally and facilitating cross-pollination across regions and sectors, and striking the perfect balance between specialist advice and peer learning and sharing.

High functioning team and skillset bridging technical to practical: We have a unique mix of knowledge and skills spanning soil science, regenerative agronomy, agroecology, social science, communications, agricultural extension and project and organisational management, and a healthy and highly functional team culture.

Our governance

Soils for Life is governed by a non-executive volunteer board made up of experienced, well-connected and mission- and values-aligned directors. We pride ourselves on having robust governance systems in place to enable the board to oversee strategic direction, financial management and risk, and safeguard the organisation's integrity, impact and long-term sustainability.

Our supporters and partners

We are proud to collaborate with a diverse range of partners and supporters, including individuals, community organisations, government agencies, businesses and industry groups. We greatly appreciate their generosity, trust, collaboration and shared vision, without which our work would not be possible. We are also grateful to our Farmer Advisory Panel, a group of highly experienced producers from around the country who are committed to our vision and convene quarterly to provide input and feedback to inform our work.

Transformational donors

Grander's Trust
 Illawong Fund
 Macdoch Foundation
 Morris Family Foundation
 Nature Impact Collective

Major donors

Band Family Foundation
 Besen Family Foundation
 Catalytic Impact Capital
 FWH Foundation
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 The Garry White Foundation
 Twynam Agriculture

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 Connellan Airways Trust
 Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal
 Graincorp
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Current & recent partners

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 Cradle Coast NRM
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 Fleurieu Farming Systems
 Gulf Savannah NRM
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 Lower Blackwood LCDC
 Macintyre Ag Alliance
 Maffra and Districts Landcare Network
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 Native Foodways
 Northern Sustainable Soils
 NRM North
 NRM South
 RegenWA
 Soilcare Inc.
 South Gippsland Landcare Network
 Terrain NRM
 Upper Barwon Landcare Network
 VicNoTill

Preferred legal service providers

Coulter Legal
 Minter Ellison

How we work

Our organisational values guide everything we do.

Soil is fundamental

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

Farmers knowledge

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

Credibility

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

Holistic approach

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



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, our soils are under threat. Australia loses an estimated 2.9 billion tonnes of soil to erosion every year. Globally, an estimated 40% of the world's farming land has already been abandoned as it is no longer fertile, and 40-60% of the world's remaining farming land is degraded.

'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, CVO, MC, Soils for Life founder and Australia's inaugural National Soils Advocate (2017)

Regenerative agriculture

Leading farmers and producers in Australia and around the world have shown that it is possible to farm in ways that build and improve the function of soil and other natural systems while reducing environmental impacts.

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.

A practical and inclusive approach

In recent years, the concept of regenerative agriculture has gained broader awareness and interest, both in Australia and internationally. We believe this is a positive trend, and we see the concept as both useful and meaningful and do use the term 'regenerative' for that reason. However, we recognise that this term has at times been used in ways that feel exclusionary.

At Soils for Life, we are inclusive about how we communicate, and prioritise relationships, not ideology. We recognise that there is no one correct way to farm, that approaches to soil and landscape stewardship are highly variable depending on the context and that everyone is on their own path. Rather than criticising anyone's current practices, we keep the focus on what information, support, resources and connections farmers need to keep going down their path of soil and landscape regeneration.

Our impact

Curiosity to confidence

As regenerative agriculture has moved into mainstream consciousness, our organisation has renewed and matured.

For almost a decade, our mission was awareness raising. We found and shared the stories of Australia’s leading farmers and producers, inspiring the next cohort of regenerative land managers and giving hope that soil stewardship through agriculture could be a solution to our greatest challenges. Thanks to the grassroots efforts of agricultural communities in Australia and around the world, and the support that we and similar organisations have provided, there are now many farmers interested in regenerative approaches to agriculture.

Over the past three years, we have shifted our focus to ensuring these newly interested farmers have access to the support they need to move from curiosity to confidence and implementation. We have done this by producing resources and guides, running training and education programs and building strong peer communities of learning and practice to counter the strong social barriers to doing things differently. At the same time, we have broadened our work beyond grazing to include broadacre cropping and rangelands, while securing funding to extend further into dairy and horticulture.



Click here or scan the code to read more about our impact.



Project highlight

Our **Cropping Resilience** project ran from 2023 to 2026 and supported around 1,200 grain growers across the nation to build knowledge, skills and confidence to improve soil and plant health and resilience. It reinforced the importance of collecting good soil and plant health data to make better in-crop decisions, and how plant health and diversity is important for improving soil function and farm resilience.

We produced more than 30 case studies and a comprehensive set of practical guides and videos that support growers to explore and begin implementing cropping practices that build soil health and climate resilience, which are now being shared and used across the industry.



96%

Ninety-six percent of growers who attended our events reported **increased understanding of how and when to implement cropping practices** to improve soil health and resilience.



Our context

Growing momentum, rising stakes

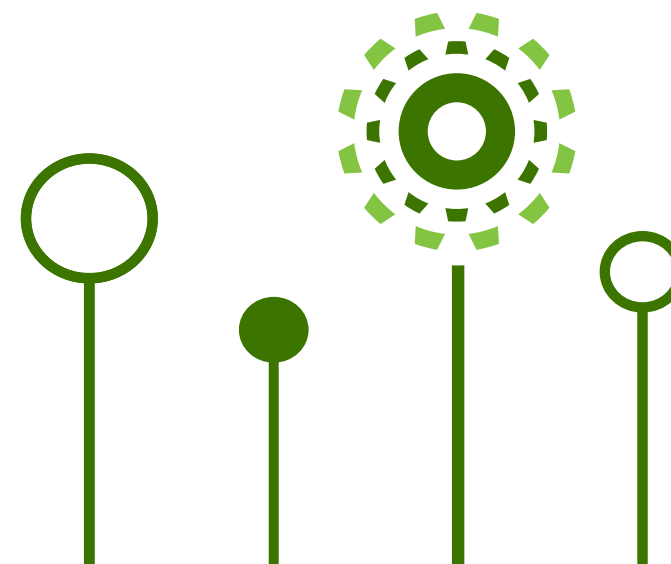
Australian farmers and producers are operating in an increasingly challenging environment. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe, input costs remain volatile and global market uncertainty continues to put pressure on farm businesses.

At the same time, there is growing recognition that farming systems built on healthy soils and functional landscapes are better equipped to withstand these pressures. Interest in regenerative approaches to agriculture has never been higher, with momentum building across farming communities, industry, media and government. This creates a strong imperative and significant opportunity to accelerate support for and adoption of soil stewardship practices.

The broader context is also shifting in ways that are relevant to how we work. Rapid advances in technology and digital tools are changing how farmers access information, connect with peers and make decisions. Public expectations around food systems, environmental sustainability and climate action continue to rise. And the policy landscape is evolving, with increasing attention to agriculture's role in climate, natural capital, biodiversity and food security.

While these trends create opportunities, they also bring risks, including the potential for regenerative agriculture to be co-opted, oversimplified or reduced to a marketing label.

Maintaining credibility, staying grounded in farmer experience and continuing to support genuine practice change is now more important than ever.

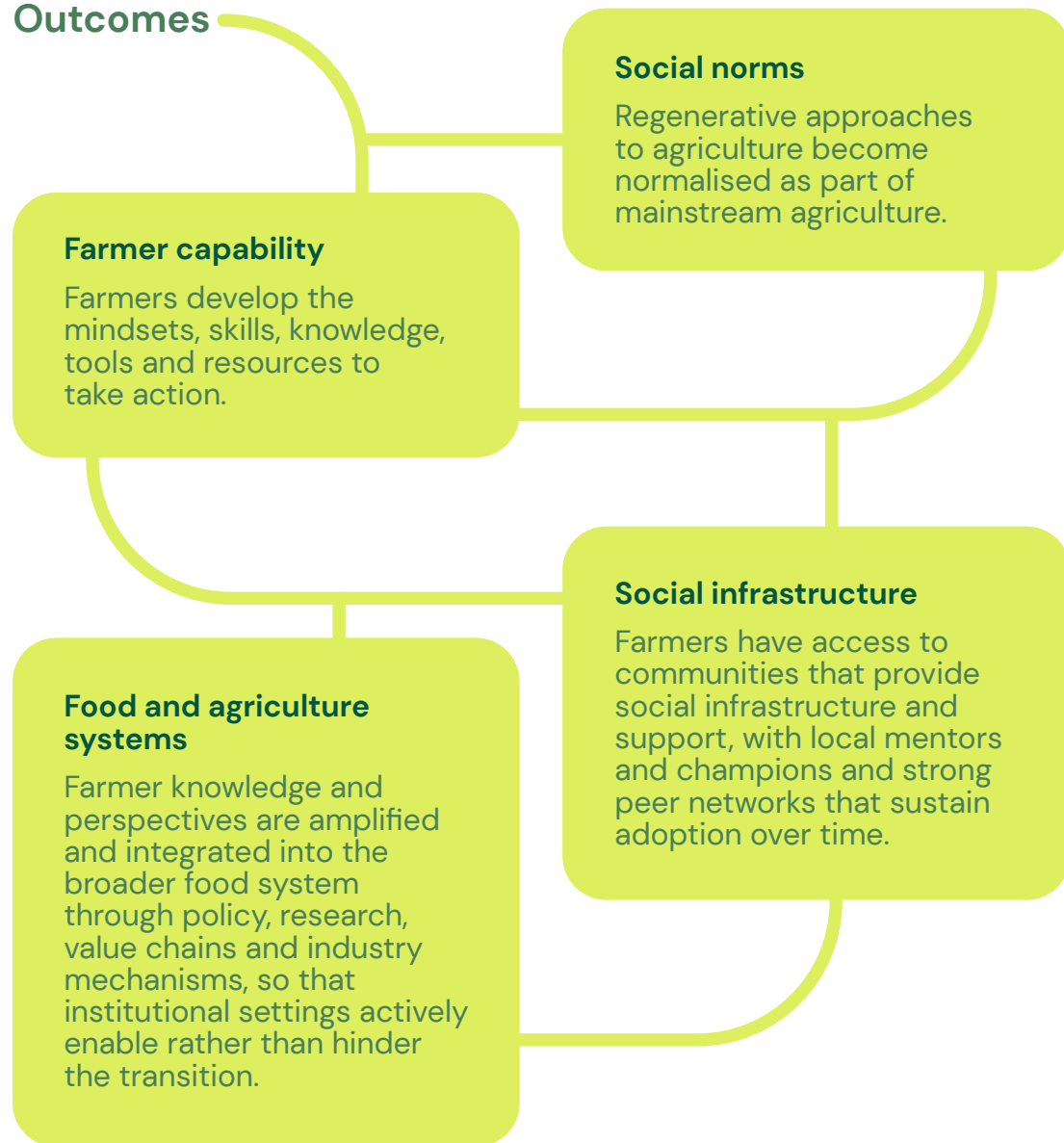


Our theory of change

Mainstreaming regenerative approaches

Our theory of change identifies four reinforcing outcomes that together can create the conditions for mainstreaming regenerative approaches to agriculture. Our strategy identifies a targeted and strategic role for Soils for Life in relation to each of these outcome areas.

Outcomes



Our strategy

Building critical mass

We have built a strong track record of supporting curious farmers and producers to move from awareness to confidence and implementation. Our central strategic challenge now is how we help more farmers, faster – reaching the critical mass our mission calls for – without simply scaling up our activity at the same rate.

Our approach is to focus on strategies that multiply our impact beyond the farmers we work with directly. For example, we support experienced and passionate farmers to become mentors and champions and upskill agronomists and advisers to efficiently extend reach. We also engage strategically with institutions to help remove barriers affecting every farmer, not just the ones we work with.

Each of these strategies is designed to create ripple effects that grow and sustain beyond our direct involvement.

Scaling impact does not mean becoming an ever-larger organisation. A lean, agile team is central to what makes us effective, allowing us to be responsive, adaptive and connected with our audiences. Our goal is to grow our impact, not our headcount. We are doing this by investing in approaches that are replicable and shareable and developing strategic partnerships.



The ripple effect

Over the next 3 years we will more than double our direct producer engagement, with more than 5,000 producers participating in our work through case studies, demonstration sites, peer learning programs, and on-farm and online events.

We will leverage this direct engagement for much wider reach through podcasts, online resources and videos, newsletters and traditional and social media, and by supporting directly engaged producers to become more effective mentors and leaders in their own communities.



Our strategic pillars

Our strategic pillars guide our work, ensuring that we are clear on our specific role and precise in the contributions we make towards the four outcome areas identified in our theory of change. Our foundational fifth pillar is focused on ensuring effective organisational function.



1 Mainstreaming regenerative approaches to agriculture



2 Building farmer skills, knowledge, tools and resources



3 Strengthening regenerative agricultural communities



4 Amplifying farmer perspectives across the food and agriculture system



5 Maintaining a high functioning organisation set up to deliver great work

Our audiences

Our primary audience is curious or open-minded farmers who are interested in regenerative approaches but haven't yet made the leap. This cohort has grown significantly in recent years, and helping them move to implementation is strategic because they are ready, but need support.

We also work closely with farmers experienced with approaches that build soil health, who are the source of many of our stories and play a vital role as mentors and advocates. And we increasingly work with on-ground intermediaries such as advisers, extension agents, agronomists, consultants and grower groups, helping build their capacity to support regenerative practice change beyond our direct reach.

Beyond these primary stakeholders, we engage strategically with the food and agriculture industry, researchers, politicians and policy makers, philanthropists and the general public, often working collaboratively with partners. While this is a secondary focus in where we dedicate our resources, our farmer networks and on-ground work give us distinctive, credible and valuable insights and perspectives to inform these audiences.



Plant and soil educator Joel Williams with case study farmers Kate Mirams and Peter Neaves at a Soils for Life field day.

Pillar One

Mainstreaming regenerative approaches to agriculture



Outcome

Regenerative approaches to agriculture become normalised as part of mainstream agriculture.

Strategies

- **Tell compelling, credible farmer stories across platforms and formats**, creating a positive narrative about regenerative agriculture and inspiring diverse audiences with authentic examples of successful practice change and the benefits that flow from it.
- **Build the profile and voice of trusted farmer advocates**, elevating the farmers we work with as visible, credible champions who normalise regenerative approaches within their communities and industries.
- **Extend our reach into new sectors, regions, partnerships and audiences**, broadening the narrative beyond grazing into cropping, dairy, horticulture and rangelands, as well as strengthening connections with aligned conservation organisations, so that regenerative agriculture is regarded as more universally relevant and valuable across all of Australian agriculture.

Targets

- » Farmers in our network are publicly visible advocates, with us supporting at least 30 opportunities per year for farmers to actively champion regenerative approaches through media, events and in their own communities.
- » Our work is being shared by third parties on average monthly, and we present at relevant high-profile third party events on average quarterly, indicating the narrative is reaching well beyond our own channels.
- » Regenerative agriculture stories originating from our work are appearing in mainstream and industry media at least 10 times per year.

Storytelling at the heart of change

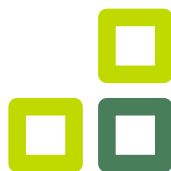
Storytelling sits at the heart of our approach. As an organisation that prioritises relationships, we know authentic stories told well, with the farmer experience at the centre, can shift people's beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours.

Our experience suggests that combining storytelling with practical information is more effective at shifting attitudes and behaviours than either approach alone. We know that we need to earn the right to tell inspiring, hopeful stories by backing them up with practical information and credible data.



Pillar Two

Building farmer and producer skills, knowledge, tools and resources



Outcome

Farmers develop the mindsets, skills, knowledge, tools and resources to take action.

Strategies

- **Develop practical, accessible resources and learning opportunities** that support farmers from curiosity to implementation, including case studies, online and in-field workshops and training, safe-to-fail trials, practice guides and decision-making tools. Design these to meet farmers where they're at, reduce barriers to taking first steps. And start to explore ways to engage the next generation of farmers, including building relationships with training and education institutions.
- **Build a Soil Stewardship Resource Centre**, providing easy access to our own resources alongside an external directory of third party services and support, backed by consistent communications that leverage maximum value from these resources by extracting useful insights and offering them to farmers in a variety of formats, in the right places and at the right times.
- **Pilot the delivery of demonstration farms**, where farmers are supported to collect robust data to better understand which practices work and why, to inform their decision making, and to support sharing with other farmers.

Targets

- » At least 75,000 unique views/downloads per year of our resources, and at least 1,000 participants per year in our learning opportunities, with at least 70% of farmers surveyed reporting that these have helped them take steps towards adopting regenerative practices on their farm.
- » The Soil Stewardship Resource Centre is established as a go-to destination for farmers seeking practical support, with up-to-date information and a growing base of returning users.
- » We have implemented at least 9 pilot demonstration farms, with data collected using a consistent evidence framework and insights shared in ways that are accessible and useful to other farmers.

The ecosystem of farmer advice

Over the past few decades, much of the publicly funded agricultural extension that once provided independent support for farmers has been scaled back. In its place, free advisory services are now largely provided by product manufacturers, which are not always independent or aligned with regenerative outcomes. At the same time, a growing ecosystem of independent advisers, consultants and training providers is emerging to support farmers adopting regenerative approaches.

Our role is not to compete with these service providers, and we refrain from providing 1:1 advice to farmers. Instead, we complement and often partner with them, mindful that many newly interested farmers are not ready to engage a specialist adviser or invest in formal training, but instead need an independent, trusted, low-cost, accessible entry point to explore ideas and build confidence. By supporting farmers through this early stage, we help grow the overall pool of farmers ready to explore new practices and engage with aligned specialist services if needed, which accelerates the pace of the transition.

Credibility, science and farmer experience

Our work draws on both scientific evidence and farmer experience, and we believe both are essential. We are not a research organisation, but as we expand into Demonstration farms and more structured farmer support programs, we are becoming more deliberate about how we collect and use data. We are developing a consistent data framework across our case studies and demonstration farms, while recognising that our primary purpose is supporting farmers, not producing research outputs. Where more in-depth research is required, we consult our extensive network of specialists and partner with research organisations who bring that capability.

We recognise that agroecosystems are highly complex and the study of these landscapes is still emerging, and we are not afraid to explore cutting edge farmer innovation even where data is still limited. Our goal is to ensure our work is credible and trustworthy, grounded in the best available evidence, transparent about what we do and don't know and always led by what is useful to farmers.

Pillar Three

Strengthening regenerative agricultural communities



Outcome

Farmers have access to communities that provide social infrastructure and support, with local mentors and champions and strong peer networks that sustain adoption over time.

Strategies

- **Refine, demonstrate and support replication of our peer learning model** by integrating peer learning activities into our work in dairy, horticulture and cropping and sharing what we learn to inform others' extension activities.
- **Strengthen the support ecosystem around farmers**, running intermediary peer groups that upskill agronomists, advisers and other trusted support people, so that farmers have access to knowledgeable, locally connected guidance beyond our own programs.
- **Grow farmer leadership and place-based networks**, developing a soil stewardship farmer leadership program that builds local mentors and champions and exploring regional models that strengthen connections between farmers, communities and landscapes at a local level.

Targets

- » Most of our learning activities, including activities delivered by partners, incorporate peer learning elements.
- » At least 50% of farmers in our network report that they have engaged with our work at least twice in the past year, and 30% report they have engaged at least 5 times.
- » At least 20% of farmers engaging with our work report that they have independently connected with another farmer as a result of their engagement.
- » We engage at least 100 advisers and agronomists in intermediary programs and other learning activities, and at least 70% report increased confidence and capability to support regenerative approaches in their networks.

Disruption, connection and community

The value of connected farming communities extends well beyond supporting practice change. Australian agriculture faces growing exposure to disruption, from climate extremes and supply chain shocks to volatile input costs and biosecurity threats. Farming systems built on healthier soils and landscapes, with less dependence on external inputs, are inherently more resilient to these disruptions. But resilience isn't only about what happens on individual farms. Communities with strong social infrastructure – trusted local networks, experienced mentors and a culture of sharing knowledge and supporting one another – are far better equipped to respond and adapt when crises hit.

The peer networks, farmer leadership and place-based connections we build through our community building work are designed to support adoption of regenerative practices today, but they also lay the foundations for community-level wellbeing and resilience to whatever disruptions lie ahead.



Pillar Four

Amplifying farmer perspectives across the food and agriculture system



Outcome

Farmer knowledge and perspectives are amplified and integrated into the broader food system through policy, research, value chains and industry mechanisms, so that institutional settings actively enable rather than hinder the transition.

Strategies

- **Identify aligned researchers and contribute to research collaborations** that aim to build a stronger scientific evidence base that reflects the knowledge and experience of the farmers we work with and supports more farmers to implement practice change.
- **Contribute to policy and advocacy initiatives**, primarily through amplifying the perspectives of our farmer network and empowering those farmers to be public advocates, leveraging our involvement with the Parliamentary Friends of Soil and our membership of the Regenerative Food and Farming Alliance.
- **Use targeted, bounded opportunities to build momentum** through a three-yearly Soil Stewardship Summit that brings together the power of our networks and relationships with insights from our work, creating a contained, high-impact moment of influence.

Targets

- » At least 40% of surveyed government, research and industry stakeholders report that engagement with Soils for Life has constructively informed or influenced their thinking on soil and landscape regeneration.
- » Farmer evidence from our on-ground work is helping to shape research agendas and policy discussions, with at least 5 documented instances per year where our insights have been shared or referenced in research or industry initiatives or policy processes.
- » A Soil Stewardship Summit has been delivered, supported by a flagship report synthesising insights and recommendations from our on-ground work, with evidence that the event helped influence and build connections between aligned non-profit organisations, policy makers, researchers and/or industry representatives.

Influencing systems

Large institutions, such as corporates, industry bodies and government agencies, shape many of the rules of the food and agriculture system. While these institutions have scale and reach, systems change theory tells a more nuanced story about how transitions actually happen. The deepest leverage points in a system are not its rules and structures, but the mindsets and paradigms that underpin them. These shifts almost always begin at the edges, with innovators, early adopters and communities of practice who demonstrate that a different way is possible long before institutions catch up.

Institutional engagement becomes most powerful when it supports these paradigm shifts, providing resources and reach to help solutions that are already working on the ground to spread faster and further. This is why our strategy keeps the majority of our focus on Pillars 1-3, which build the evidence, the stories, the skills and the communities that shift norms from the ground up. Our Pillar 4 work ensures that insights from this on-ground work reach the people and institutions with the power to remove barriers and create enabling conditions, through targeted, strategic engagement and partnerships rather than trying to be at every table.



Pillar Five

Organisational foundations



Outcome

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

- **Secure long-term, diversified funding** that enables greater reach and impact, building on our progress in broadening our funding base by pursuing larger, multi-year commitments and growing untied revenue to give us the flexibility to invest where it's most needed and leverage philanthropic investment to attract strategic project funding.
- **Build strategic, mutually beneficial partnerships**, particularly with Landcare groups, NRM organisations, producer groups, extension teams, First Nations organisations and researchers, and make the most of existing relationships with government, industry and other non-profit organisations to extend our reach and deepen our impact.
- **Steward a safe, inclusive, flexible, fun and high-performing work environment and culture**, underpinned by excellent and efficient operational policies and processes, and invest in the systems, including feedback, data collection and communications, that enable us to learn, adapt and demonstrate our impact.

Targets

- » Total annual income targets are achieved, with increasing multi-year funding commitments, high levels of recommitment of existing donors and a balance of tied and untied funds.
- » Partners report high levels of effectiveness and satisfaction in our collaborations.
- » High level of staff satisfaction and wellbeing, and staff report that we are living up to our Culture Agreement.

Building First Nations relationships

First Nations peoples have been stewarding the soils and landscapes of this continent for tens of thousands of years. As an organisation focused on soil health and landscape function, we recognise both the opportunity and the responsibility to engage more meaningfully with First Nations communities and knowledge systems.

We are at an early stage of this journey, and we are approaching it with humility. Rather than rushing to define what engagement looks like, we are learning through practice and listening, beginning with our partnership with Native Foodways through the Orchard Resilience project. This partnership is helping us build cultural awareness, understand how to engage respectfully and reciprocally and explore where genuine alignment exists between Indigenous land management knowledge and the regenerative farming practices we support. What we learn through this work will inform how we deepen and broaden our First Nations engagement over the life of this strategy and beyond.



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What we do

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.



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Acknowledgement of Country

Soils for Life acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea, water and community.

We pay our respect to the Traditional Custodians, their culture and Elders both past and present. We recognise and value Indigenous knowledge systems, and the imperative to listen to and work with Traditional Owners as we collectively learn how to heal Country.