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Carbon management rooted in soil stewardship

Recent announcements by the government and opposition parties send a strong signal that Australia sees soil and land management as primary issues in Australia's response to climate change. The announcements also vindicate the work to date by a range of businesses, farmers, schools and Local Authorities who have been focussed on building soil carbon over the past five years.

Pioneering carbon offset aggregator, Prime Carbon, has long advocated that improving Australian soils not only improves Australia's food security, but can help manage climate change as well. Prime Carbon works with Australian landholders to adopt land management practices that improve soil quality and extract CO2 from the atmosphere.

Prime Carbon Director, Mr Ken Bellamy said the company was grateful that both Government and opposition have taken an apolitical approach to a subject that is clearly in the national interest.

"We applaud the bipartisan approach to this subject and are truly grateful for the courage and detailed attention which the Gillard Government and the opposition have given to this important national issue," he said.

The program advocated by Prime Carbon provides financial rewards to farmers and other landholders who build and maintain reserves of carbon in their land and reduce their reliance on other inputs. This in turn has flow-on benefits in soil fertility and water management.

Soil carbon capture works by photosynthesis in plants and in soil. So it is no surprise that Prime Carbon has chosen to focus on facilitation of management processes which promote sustained photosynthesis in soil.

A Menu of Products and Services has been compiled which lists products and processes which have been independently shown to improve or maintain in-soil photosynthesis.

Key issues in any program to improve overall soil quality are training as to what is actually going on below the soil surface and an understanding of various ways to measure progress. The government has indicated that training will be a key feature of its 'Carbon Farming Initiative'. Similarly, Prime Carbon insists that farmers are trained and given assistance in techniques and developments which go beyond the "status quo" of land management and reach for better understanding of processes which help build the essential quality of soils.

A number of providers of biological products, including VRM Pty Ltd, Twin N, Ylad Composts and various defined management protocols have undergone assessment programs to ensure that their innovative products are providing something extra to this discussion. Such products now provide a platform for landholders to begin looking at ways to improve the overall health and resilience of their soils.

Ken Bellamy is the director of Townsville-based biotech company Vital Resource Management (VRM). Please e-mail questions to: enquiries@vrm.com.au