



## CEO COMMUNIQUE

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**7 May 2020**

### **2020 Major Investment Round 3**

The Board of the Soil CRC met last week and considered the recommendations of the Research and Adoption Committee (RAC) regarding project proposals submitted to the Soil CRC under the 2020 Major Investment Round 3 (Round 20-1).

In summary, the Board approved **8 projects** with a project lifetime commitment of **\$3.5m**.

The Research and Adoption Committee assessed all 11 project submissions against the criteria outlined in the Guidelines for Proposals and subsequently ranked and prioritised them. The recommendations of the RAC were presented to the Board, who after considerable discussion, approved the recommended projects with some further minor modifications. Some projects will require budget and/or delivery modification before being contracted and we will be working with Project Leaders and their partners in coming weeks to achieve this.

The projects that have been approved by the Board under Round 20-1 are as follows (Project title, Project Leader, lead organisation):

#### **Program 1 – Investing in high performance soils**

- Activating financial markets to reward soil stewardship – Nicholas Pawsey, Charles Sturt University
- On-farm drivers of decision making across Australian farming systems – Hanabeth Luke, Southern Cross University
- Addressing barriers to adoption: Building farmer innovation capability - Phase 2 – David Falepau, Charles Sturt University

#### **Program 2 – Soil performance metrics**

- A coordinated and consistent approach to managing and enabling soil data – Nathan Robinson, Federation University Australia

#### **Program 3 – New products to increase fertility and function**

- The value of organic amendments in unlocking soil nutrients and improving nutrient use efficiency – Balaji Seshadri, University of Newcastle

- Organic and clay-based moisture retention products for farming under dry conditions – Chengrong Chen, Griffith University
- New organic-based amendments for enhanced nutrient use efficiency and soil carbon – Terry Rose, Southern Cross University

#### **Program 4 – Integrated and precision soil management solutions**

- Integrated solutions for underperforming constrained soils: Accessing soil moisture – Ehsan Tavakkoli, NSW DPI
- A further project was provisionally approved subject to modification and subsequent approval by the RAC.

In addition, at its previous meeting, the Board also approved an out-of-session project in Program 4, with significant GRDC co-investment:

- More profitable crops on highly calcareous soils by improving early vigour and overcoming soil constraints – Nigel Wilhelm, Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA).

All Project Leaders (both successful and unsuccessful) and their organisations have been informed directly of the Board decisions and are now in the process of communicating to their project teams. Whilst the Project Leaders and their organisations are listed above, all projects involve collaboration across a number of CRC participants, including many farmer and grower group participants.

Further details on each of these projects will be placed on the Soil CRC website in coming weeks, including information on the value and benefit that each project will deliver to farmers, in the short or long term.

I would like to thank and acknowledge everyone who contributed to this process, especially the Project Leaders who coordinated the scientific thinking, the writing and the budget preparation with each of their proposed project teams.

This brings the total amount of cash funds that the Soil CRC has now committed to projects to over \$19 million. It is worth noting that another four PhD students will be funded through projects in this round, bringing the total so far to 38. We will make a similar call for projects later this year and a further call for PhD students in 2021.



## COVID-19 impacts

The known and potential impacts of COVID-19 on the Soil CRC were discussed at the recent Board meeting. The Board endorsed a policy of continuing to maintain timely payments to projects, even if milestones are delayed due to COVID impacts. They recognised that in principle, projects may require additional funds for completion if they are delayed due to COVID, subject to approval of variations. In doing so, the Board stressed the importance of all of our partners continuing to employ the specialist human capability required to deliver the activities of the Soil CRC, now and into the future.

Project team members are requested to update Project Leaders on impacts of COVID on project delivery, and in turn, Project Leaders should be keeping Program Leaders informed of any disruptions. As notified in my last Communique, when we have a clear picture of the total extent of disruption caused by COVID-19 restrictions on project milestones and deliverables, we can instigate formal variations to account for the agreed revisions to a project.

Above all, it is important that you follow the advice and guidelines of the relevant authorities, as well as those of your employer organisation, to protect your own health and safety and limit the spread of COVID-19 as much as possible.

*The Soil CRC head office team in our daily zoom meeting.*



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## Board committees

The Board of the Soil CRC is supported in its governance activities by a number of Committees. Due to the appointment of two new Directors at the last Annual General Meeting, and the establishment of the Commercialisation and Intellectual Property Advisory Committee (CIPAC), the membership of the various Committees was reviewed, and is now as follows:

### **Commercialisation and Intellectual Property Advisory Committee (CIPAC)**

Anna Lavelle (Chair)  
Paul Greenfield  
Robbie Sefton  
plus one external member

#### **Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC)**

Ralph Hardy (Chair)

Andrea Bishop

Kate Lorimer-Ward

Robbie Sefton

#### **Research and Adoption Committee (RAC)**

Roger Swift (Chair)

Malcolm Buckby

Steve Carr

plus external members

#### **Nominations and Selection Committee (NSC)**

Paul Greenfield (Chair)

Malcolm Buckby

Kate Lorimer-Ward

Roger Swift

#### **Remuneration Committee**

Paul Greenfield (Chair)

Andrea Bishop

Roger Swift

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### **Program Milestone Review**

The review of the Program Milestones is progressing while in lockdown. We successfully ran a series of Program workshops via Zoom with each workshop attracting about 30 participants. Attendees had the opportunity to provide feedback and to contribute ideas. Program Leaders have now discussed suggested changes with the Research and Adoption Committee and made further changes as a result.

In coming weeks, an exposure draft of all the proposed changes will be circulated to the lead representative of each Participant for comment and feedback, before a finalised version is presented to the Board and the Commonwealth for approval. While the Soil CRC has made good progress against all of its milestones to date, this review provides the opportunity to ensure that the contracted milestones are the most appropriate going forward.

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### **Webinars**

In case you missed our Soil CRC Participants Conference webinars, you can find all five on our [website](#).

There are presentations from each Program with two projects in each program giving an overview. There is also a webinar on our special project - Managing soils for high performance after a drought.

Keep your eye out for more webinars from the Soil CRC.





# PARTICIPANTS CONFERENCE

2020

**SOiL** CRC  
Performance through collaboration

## Other CEO activities

No travel. Working from home. Lots of Zoom meetings. Lots of phone calls. Lots of emails. Like everyone else!

Kind Regards

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## Conferences

[National Soils Conference](#), 29 Nov - 4 Dec, Cairns Qld

## Contact list

We forward this communique directly to staff in our Participant organisations who we believe should be receiving communications about the CRC. If you do not wish to receive communications directly, please unsubscribe. If there are others who wish to be on the list, please forward their names to Kathy Stokes at [kathy.stokes@soilcrc.com.au](mailto:kathy.stokes@soilcrc.com.au).



Performance through collaboration

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