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# A Farmer's Guide to the Soil Carbon Sequestration Methodology version2

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## This method applies to:

- Soil carbon sequestration projects (drawing down carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in soil and vegetation)
- Most Agricultural Systems including cropping, pasture, horticulture and mixed enterprises.
- Relies upon direct measurement of soil carbon to calculate sequestration (rather than a modelled approach).

## Projects can be carried out on:

- Land has been used for grazing, cropping (including perennial woody horticulture), bare fallow or any combination of grazing, cropping or bare fallow provided at least one or more applied at all times over the previous 10 years (baseline period) . Records showing this will be required at audit time.
- Land which has soil carbon improvement potential.
- Land which you are able to sample to at least a 30cm depth.

## Eligible Activities:

Examples of activities which can be undertaken on the project area to improve soil carbon include, but are not restricted to:

- converting from cropland to permanent pasture
- changing pasture species composition
- changing grazing patterns.
- water ponding activities – where water effect is 'spread' over a wider area, effectively increasing effective rainfall and carbon
- pasture cropping
- application of Synthetic Fertilisers
- application of Non Synthetic Fertilisers. (There are timing requirements around these applications)
- clay spreading and clay delving
- other 'innovative' activities that are aimed at improving carbon stocks. These need to be assessed on a case by case basis
- 'new' irrigation (some definitions apply)
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## Summary:

This document is a summary only and you should consult a Carbon Service Provider or another group or person who understands the method to ensure ALL aspects of the method are followed and to make any decisions to develop a project. The details written in the method set out the rules for implementation and monitoring.

## Your 'Carbon Farm' Plan:

This methodology may be able to be used with another CFI method, at the same time on the same piece of land, e.g. Reduced methane in cattle.

Further to this, there may be other areas of the farm which could be used for a different method, for example, an Environmental Plantings project, where areas can be planted with species native to your district and you can be paid for the carbon stored in the trees over time.

Carbon Farmers of Australia (CFA) can assist to assess which methods may apply to your wider 'carbon farm plan'.

- compost application – depending on where the ‘waste’ material comes from
- there are some limits on the use of some waste, such as straw. This will depend on the waste stream and its origins and can be assessed on a case by case basis
- the application of amendments containing biochar are allowable under certain circumstances.

Please seek expert advice on which activities best suit your project site, or submit YOUR innovative ‘carbon sequestration’ process or product to CFA for an informed opinion on its applicability.

## Project Duration:

There has been much discussion around the so called ‘100 year rule’ which was a barrier to soil carbon projects. Soil Carbon Projects can now nominate either 25 year or 100 year permanence periods:

- For a 100 year permanence project, there is no deduction of ACCUs (Australian Carbon Credit Units) over the 25 years crediting period that you can earn credits from the project. HOWEVER, after that time, you have a ‘carbon maintenance obligation’ NOT to keep soil carbon levels for the next 75 years.
- For a 25 year project, 20% of the ACCUs will be deducted over the 25 year project crediting period (provided you measure increases). After 25 years, there is NO obligation on the project area in terms of carbon levels. (Most farmers feel this project style suits their operational requirements)
- There are other discounts within the method which diminish over time. These can be discussed on a case by case basis.

## ‘NEWNESS’ test.

Farmers can choose a large number of land management activities to build soil carbon. **This choice must include at least one new management activity.** This is to pass the ‘newness’ test, which ensures that the carbon stored is not ‘business as usual’ but additional.

However, the activities (for instance soil amendment) will need to demonstrate that it is LIKELY to improve soil carbon storage rates. And meet other requirements of the method, such as being included in a ‘Land Management Strategy’.

## What will Carbon Farmers of Australia do?:

- Identify potential for successful projects with attention given to size, climate, soil types, history etc. Could be soil carbon method and/or others.

- In conjunction with the Landholder, write the Land Management Strategy and organise an independent review. This useful exercise helps to set the scene for the future plans. It will help ensure the success of the project.

- Register your project – ensuring the rules are followed.

-The information required for this also informs the Management Strategy as we identify the ‘Carbon Estimation Areas’ (CEA’s) and other records from the past to support the registration.

- Once Registered, organise and oversee Soil Sampling Procedures. These will have been discussed in detail in the above 2 steps.

- “New Activity” - CFA has contacts with a number of different ‘providers’ of products or services which they believe will increase soil carbon. While it is the responsibility of the landholder to satisfy themselves that the product or service WILL increase soil carbon, CFA can assist in asking the right questions of providers. CFA will ensure the activity can pass the ‘newness’ test.

- Ensure that the ‘new activity’ is implemented in the correct time frame and stays true to the Land Management Strategy.

## Land Management Strategy:

An independent person must write or review a 'land management strategy' which will outline the way the activities are likely to improve soil carbon levels and evidence for this.

This can be written by your Carbon Service Provider, but will need to be 'reviewed' by someone without an interest in the project.

The strategy can be an appendix to an existing Farm Management Plan, or a stand alone or a stand-alone document. The strategy will provide a clear implementation pathway, which must be regularly reviewed.

## Audit:

Every project is subject to a certain number of audits over the 25 years that you can earn an income from your project. This 'audit schedule' will be given to you when you register the project.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please contact:

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- Liaise with Landholder on any changes to Plan. It is the responsibility of the Landholder to understand under WHAT conditions they need to alert any changes in the plan. Livestock increases and decreases need to be recorded (not livestock movements)

- Keep required records where necessary - Although the Landholder should also keep records.

## Soil Sampling:

The methodology sets out a process for soil sampling and analysis to measure carbon levels in soil. These methods are now more flexible, but are still a 'specialised' service. You need to ask your Carbon Service provider why the method/supplier they are recommending are the best fit for your project. There are a number of groups working to reduce the cost of soil sampling now.