

EXPERTS IN SOIL HEALTH

FARMERS and graziers need every advantage when it comes to getting the most out of their soil.

Increasing profits without damaging soil quality will be the focus of two free forums in Biloela and Rockhampton on Monday, October 13.

Healthy Soils Inc and the regional Landcare facilitator are bringing experts in soil biology to the region to present cutting-edge research findings and discuss how they apply to the Central Queensland landscape.

Healthy Soils Inc chair Mick Alexander said presenters would share outcomes from the most exciting soil project in decades, recently completed by the Grains Research Development Corporation.

"The day will highlight the importance of maintaining a microbe balance and diversity to enable nutrient cycling and disease suppression, as well as looking at the key indicators of healthy soils," Mr Alexander said.

"The latest scientific

research in Australia has shown the potential of using natural systems that are low cost and high impact."

Mr Alexander said talking about soil health and soil carbon with farmers had improved in the last decade.

"Smart farmers know the soil is the key and the microbes in the soil drive the production system," he said.

Keynote speaker Dr Pauline Mele is a soil microbial ecologist and the Australian co-ordinator of the Soil Biology Initiative.

She leads a team of scientists who have been working for five years to unlock the secrets of Australian soil and compile appropriate management systems.

Dr Mele will be joined by Dr Nikki Seymour and CQUniversity soil microbiologist Dr Sandrine Makiela.

On October 13, there will be a full-day forum session in Biloela, followed by a two-hour evening session in Rockhampton.

Soil biology - unlocking the secrets

Free forum in Rockhampton and Biloela | A Queensland first!

Experts will share the latest cutting edge science and how we can use soil biology in CQ farming and grazing systems to our advantage - for better profit and long-term sustainability.

Date: Monday 13 October 2014

Biloela: 9am - 4pm

Rockhampton: 7pm - 9pm

Cost: Free, meals provided

More information at
www.healthysoil.org.au/

Farmers, graziers, consultants and extension staff are offered a unique opportunity to access experts and senior scientists from interstate.

Get your soil questions answered, learn about management options that build healthy soils and increase production.

Secure your place:

RVSP by Friday 10 October

Healthy Soils Inc.
Mick Alexander
P | 0438 395 255

Regional Landcare Facilitator
P | 4999 2842
kate.wilson@fba.org.au



The dirt on soil health

HEALTHY Soils and The Regional Landcare Facilitator were behind the soil information workshop presented at the Biloela ANZAC Memorial Club this week.

Two of Australia's top soil microbiologists, Dr Lori Phillips and Dr Nikki Seymour, joined guest speakers Dr Pauline Mele and Dr Sandrine Makiela to talk about improving profits while maintaining soil quality.

"They're talking about how to upskill farmers and how to use natural systems for grazing and cropping," Healthy Soils' Mick Alexander said.

"There is also information about more natural systems to create more profit."

The Regional Landcare Facilitator program's Kate Wilson said the partnership with Healthy Soils was important for the Banana farming and agriculture community.

"The amount of interest shown is great," she said.

"Over 80 people have come and that shows how much value the information is to the community."

WORKSHOPS

SOIL HEALTH IS VITAL

Natural nutrient cycling pays off

CREATING long-term productivity and preventing plant diseases were key topics discussed at soil biology workshops in Biloela and Rockhampton.

CQUniversity microbiology lecturer and Healthy Soils Inc secretary Dr Sandrine Makiela spoke at the forums, held in conjunction with the Fitzroy Basin Association, on October 13.

About 80 people attended the forum in Biloela, while about 50 came to the Rockhampton session.

Dr Makiela, who has researched soil microbes, spoke to guests about the major groups of soil microbes and their role in nutrient cycling to keep soil healthy.

Although researchers are still looking into the long-term effects of fertiliser and herbicides on soil microbes, Dr Makiela said using natural nutrient cycling would result in long-term sustainability and "reduce the chemical dependency".

Forum guests also heard



■ MANAGING MICROBES: Rockhampton guests at the Healthy Soils Inc and Fitzroy Basin Association learn about improving soil quality at the soil biology forum. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

from experts Dr Pauline Mele and Dr Nicole Seymour, who in part spoke about early results of the Grains Research and Development Corp Soil Biology Initiative 2.

The five-year program,

which is in its final stages, examined soil quality monitoring, nutrient management and disease suppressive soils.

Dr Makiela said the results of the research could

eventually change land management practices and give landowners more tools to monitor soil quality.

"Hopefully with further findings, we can start preventing diseases."

Dr Makiela will be speaking about soil microbiology at the Fitzroy Basin Association Small Landholder Field Day at Swan Park, Yeppoon, on Saturday, November 8, from 8.30am to 3.30pm.

“The results of the research could eventually change land management practices and give landowners more tools to monitor soil quality”

DR SANDRINE MAKIELA