



Media Release

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For immediate release

Vegetable Growers Put Soils First

Healthy soil means healthy vegetables. Today vegetable growers embraced a new era of soil management when a new handy 'Ute guide' was officially released today by Minister for Agriculture Peter McGauran at the National Vegetable Expo, Werribee.

This portable handbook known as the 'Soil Interpretation Ute Guide' will assist vegetable growers across Australia to manage and monitor their soil in an effort to promote and restore soil health for even healthier tasty vegetables.

The Ute Guide is one of 10 major projects within the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Farms Programme, a \$5 million initiative of the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust. The programme is managed by Land & Water Australia and supported by the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

The Soil Interpretation Ute Guide is a pictorial reference guide which assists vegetable growers to measure and record the health of their soil.

AUSVEG's Environmental Manager Helena Whitman believes that the guide is a valuable resource, as it has been tailored to the specific needs of vegetable growers.

"Historically, there has been little information of specific relevance for vegetable growers. Many growers have a general understanding of their soil, however they are always looking for ways to enhance production and profitability for their businesses, without degrading the sustainability of their soil," Helena said.

The guide, which is designed to be carried around in the ute or tractor, will cover the soil types in each vegetable growing region nationally, with pictorial references to assist growers to determine if there is a problem in their soil.

Principal researcher Dr David McKenzie, an expert in soil management and research, has worked closely on the development of the guide, and is keen to highlight the importance of healthy soils for sustainable vegetable growing.

"By providing growers with an understanding of the soil management issues in their region, the guide will promote better productivity, better soil use, reduced input costs and ultimately a healthier more sustainable soil profile increasing the productive life of the farm."

In conjunction with the guide, growers will also have access to an instructional CD/DVD. This will be ideal for time-poor growers, as well as for growers with non-English speaking backgrounds, as the CD/DVD will have practical demonstrations and images that can be viewed or verbal descriptions that can be listened to, assisting those growers that have either literacy or language difficulties.

There will also be a series of Soil Interpretation and Management courses run nationally to assist vegetable growers in each state to learn more about their soil profile, to identify and interpret soil structure and chemistry, to restore or improve the health of the soil and to select the appropriate crop for the soil with the least impacts on the broader environment.

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For further information, contact Helena Whitman on 0409 535 051.