

Sustainable Farms Strategic Plan 2022–2025

Sustainable Farms is an initiative of The Australian National University that supports farmers to transition to significantly greater sustainability. We demonstrate that better environmental management on farms not only boosts native biodiversity but also supports primary production.

Our Natural Asset Farming framework, articulated in *Natural Asset Farming: Creating Productive and Biodiverse Farms* (2022), provides a new approach to sustainable farming that is both accessible and transformative.

This approach has been developed through more than two decades of on-farm ecological research and thousands of conversations between researchers and farmers. Our current economic research and modelling supports the observations of these farmers with new evidence to show that when natural assets are well managed, they deliver dividends in multiple ways.

In partnership with regional NRM, Landcare and agricultural industry organisations, we deliver an outreach program to engage with farmers across an area spanning 8.3 million hectares in the temperate woodlands of south-eastern Australia.



Vision:

Healthy Farmers, Healthy Farms, Healthy Profits

Mission:

To support the improvement of natural asset management on farms in the temperate woodlands, to enhance biodiversity, increase farm profitability and improve farmer wellbeing.



**SUSTAINABLE
FARMS**

Strategic Goals

GOAL 1

Biodiversity on farms is appropriately conserved and biodiversity outcomes are improving.

SUB-GOAL 1.1 Connect with more than 30% of farmers in the project region to support investment in on-farm natural assets.

SUB-GOAL 1.2 Inform the development and delivery of natural asset restoration projects developed by regional NRM and Landcare organisations with contemporary and long-term ecological research.

SUB-GOAL 1.3 Deliver capacity-building initiatives for the NRM sector to support their capacity to improve the ecological literacy of farmers.

SUB-GOAL 1.4 Utilise social science methodologies to identify cultural drivers and social benefits of natural asset restoration activities on farms, to provide guidance for the design of NRM programs.

Outcomes:

- Farmers have access to high quality educational opportunities and resources.
- Increased number of farmers and land managers who understand the benefits of natural asset management on farms.
- An increase in the number of farmers adopting improved management practices to enhance natural assets on their farms.
- Collaborative partnerships with key regional stakeholders including NSW Local Land Services, Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare networks and groups, and agricultural agencies and organisations.
- NRM facilitators have access to high quality training workshops on the science of natural asset management on farms.
- An increase in the number and reach of NRM facilitators supporting farmers to adopt new practices to enhance natural assets.
- NRM organisations have access to data on the drivers of practice change, to support adaptive management in the delivery of programs that aim to engage with farmers.

GOAL 2

Drive policy change and investment in natural asset management on farms based on scientific evidence of the public and private benefits.

SUB-GOAL 2.1 Produce and disseminate high-impact economic research and analysis that identifies and quantifies:

- the economic case for farmers to invest in natural asset management,
- the decision framework farmers use to determine whether to invest in natural assets, and
- how the economic case for investment changes with new markets and policy incentives.

SUB-GOAL 2.2 Build support for the integration of biodiversity into sustainable farming practices across key institutions and industry groups.

SUB-GOAL 2.3 Advocate for robust approaches to measuring and validating natural capital through financial instruments.

SUB-GOAL 2.4 Advocate for the value of community initiatives for landscape restoration.

SUB-GOAL 2.5 Catalyse policy change in the agricultural industry and policy sector.

Outcomes:

- Policy, programs and regulations that support the integration of biodiversity into sustainable farming practices.
- Robust biodiversity indicators based on Sustainable Farms long-term data sets.
- Monitoring programs that measure biodiversity responses to restoration activity on farms to support engagement with financial markets.
- Tools and technical resources available to external stakeholders to guide and report on investments in natural asset management.



GOAL 3

Expand our knowledge of how to undertake effective restoration in agricultural landscapes to support biodiversity, productivity and climate adaptation.

SUB-GOAL 3.1 Continue to implement long-term monitoring of biodiversity responses to a broad range of natural asset management practices on farms in the project area.

SUB-GOAL 3.2 Initiate new scientific studies to understand the relationships between landscape function and biodiversity.

Outcomes:

- Published research on how changes in biodiversity, production and climate adaptation are related to natural asset management practices.
- Optimal land management practices identified for Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands in NSW travelling stock reserves.

GOAL 4

The strategic objectives of the Sustainable Farms initiative are supported by effective project management and investment.

SUB-GOAL 4.1 Develop a fundraising strategy to achieve long-term success at scale (\$2M+ per annum).

SUB-GOAL 4.2 Build a learning environment within the project to support innovation.

SUB-GOAL 4.3 Develop a work culture that is inclusive and engaging and supports a high-performing team.

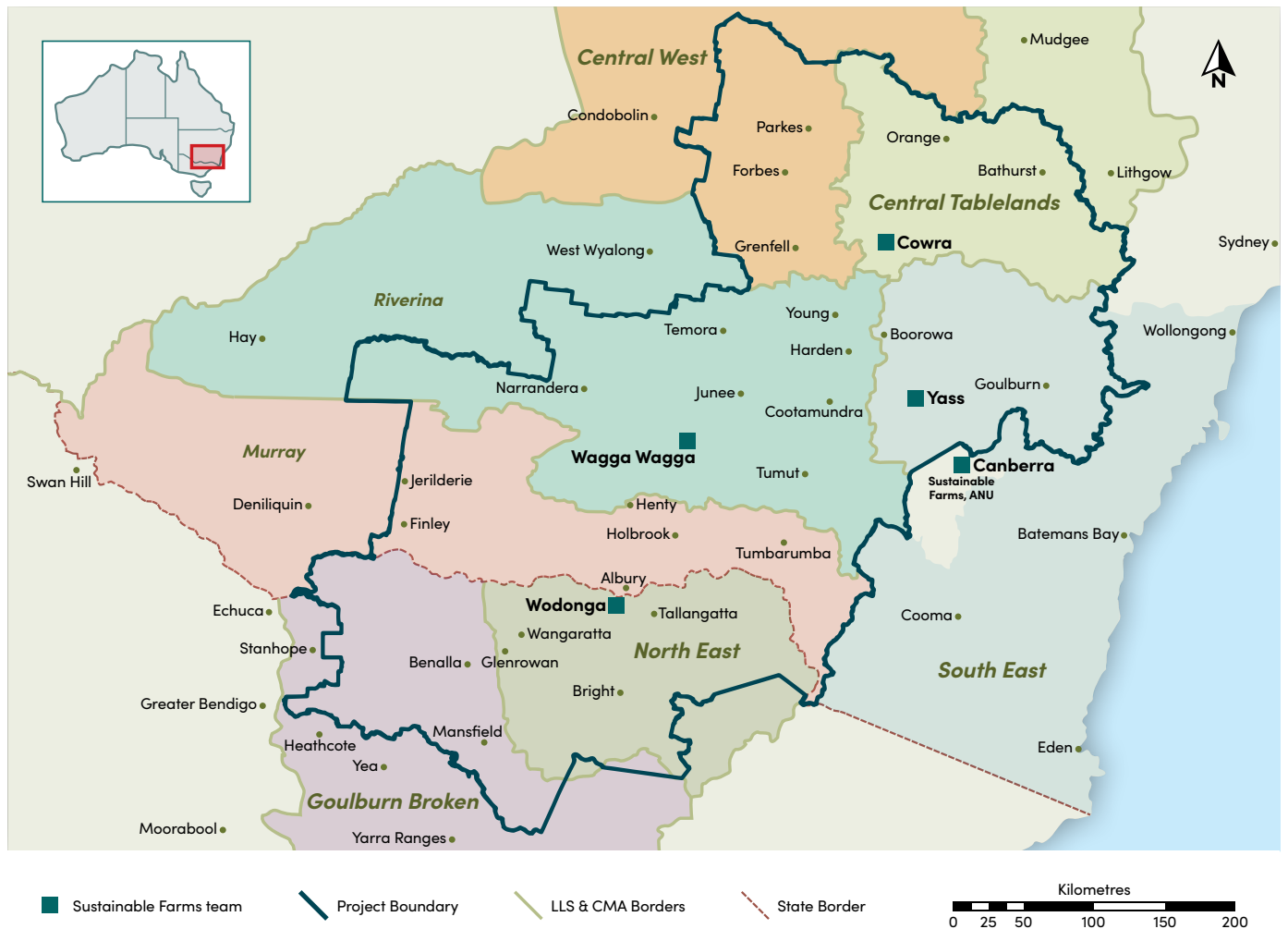
SUB-GOAL 4.4 Support and mentor emerging leaders in research, from a range of disciplines across the Australian National University, who are seeking to work on the conservation of woodland biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.

Outcomes:

- Project revenue generated through implementation of the fundraising strategy.
- Development of industry partnerships for joint projects
- Monitoring and evaluation practices are embedded in the project and support adaptive management
- A high-performing team who are meeting their performance goals.



The Sustainable Farms project area



BirdCast: Indicating birdlife on farms

Visit SustainableFarms.org.au/birdcast and try our scenario planning tool for biodiversity on farms in the box-gum grassy woodlands.

Using decades of data on more than sixty birds, BirdCast indicates which birds may live in woodlands on a farm, and demonstrates the potential for biodiversity in a range of scenarios. The tool enables farmers, land managers and advisors to access decades of research to inform on-ground decision making and demonstrate the results of sustainable farm practices.



SustainableFarms.org.au

T (02) 6125 4669

E sustainablefarms@anu.edu.au

ANU Sustainable Farms acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and we pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

Sustainable Farms is an Australian National University initiative supported by philanthropic organisations, industry groups and government.



Australian National University



SUSTAINABLE FARMS