

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.

To achieve this we will:

- Support farmers to enhance their on-farm natural assets, through:
 - Working collaboratively with regional NRM, Landcare and agricultural industry organisations to engage with farmers through an extension program of farm field days and other educational community events
 - Ongoing development of new tools and resources to share our research
 - Promoting the Natural Asset Farming framework on digital platforms and in rural media
 - Connecting with more than 30% of farmers in the project region through our communications and extension activities by 2025
- Engage with existing champions of sustainable farming practices and support the emergence of new advocates
- Showcase farmer best practice through our extension program
- Undertake and deliver contemporary and long-term ecological research to inform the development and delivery of natural asset restoration projects developed by regional NRM and Landcare organisations
- Deliver capacity-building initiatives for the NRM sector to enable them to further support the ecological literacy of farmers, including:
 - Expanding on the existing program of training workshops for NRM and Landcare professionals
 - Working to professionalise the ecological knowledge and pedagogical expertise that NRM professionals need to support farmers in adopting new natural asset enhancement practices
- 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.

GOAL 2

Biodiversity is valued as a core pillar of sustainable agricultural management, as the driver of key ecosystem services that support primary production.

To achieve this we will:

- Build support for the integration of biodiversity into sustainable farming practices across key institutions and industry groups through:
 - Providing expert advice to government, industry and the finance sector to support programs, policy and regulation for Natural Asset Farming
 - Amplifying the voices of farmers who are engaged in managing their natural assets to improve landscape function
- Produce and disseminate high-impact economic research and analysis that identifies and quantifies:
 - The economic case for farmers to invest in natural assets
 - The decision framework farmers use to determine whether to invest in natural assets
 - How the economic case for investment changes with new markets and policy incentives
- Advocate for robust approaches to:
 - The development of biodiversity indicators on farms
 - The design of monitoring programs to measure biodiversity responses to restoration activity on farms
- Advocate for the value of community initiatives for landscape restoration.



GOAL 3

Farm landscapes are being effectively monitored to demonstrate positive conservation outcomes as a result of sustainable agricultural management practices.

To achieve this we will:

- Continue to implement long-term monitoring of biodiversity responses to a broad range of natural asset management practices on farms in the project area
- Design and deliver monitoring activities to demonstrate improvements in biodiversity that are related to natural asset restoration projects
- Plan and review our research outputs with regional NRM organisations
- Initiate new studies to understand the relationships between landscape function and biodiversity including:
 - Identifying optimal land management practices for endangered box-gum grassy woodlands in NSW travelling stock reserves. Findings will have implications for 3.2 million hectares in NSW and QLD, and bring together Indigenous cultural burning practitioners with land managers and scientific experts.
 - Completing the modelling and analysis of carbon benefits provided by natural asset management projects, including estimates of carbon storage and sequestration values in the Crown road reserves network across farms in NSW
 - Estimating the value of protecting remnant vegetation on Crown roads in NSW.

GOAL 4

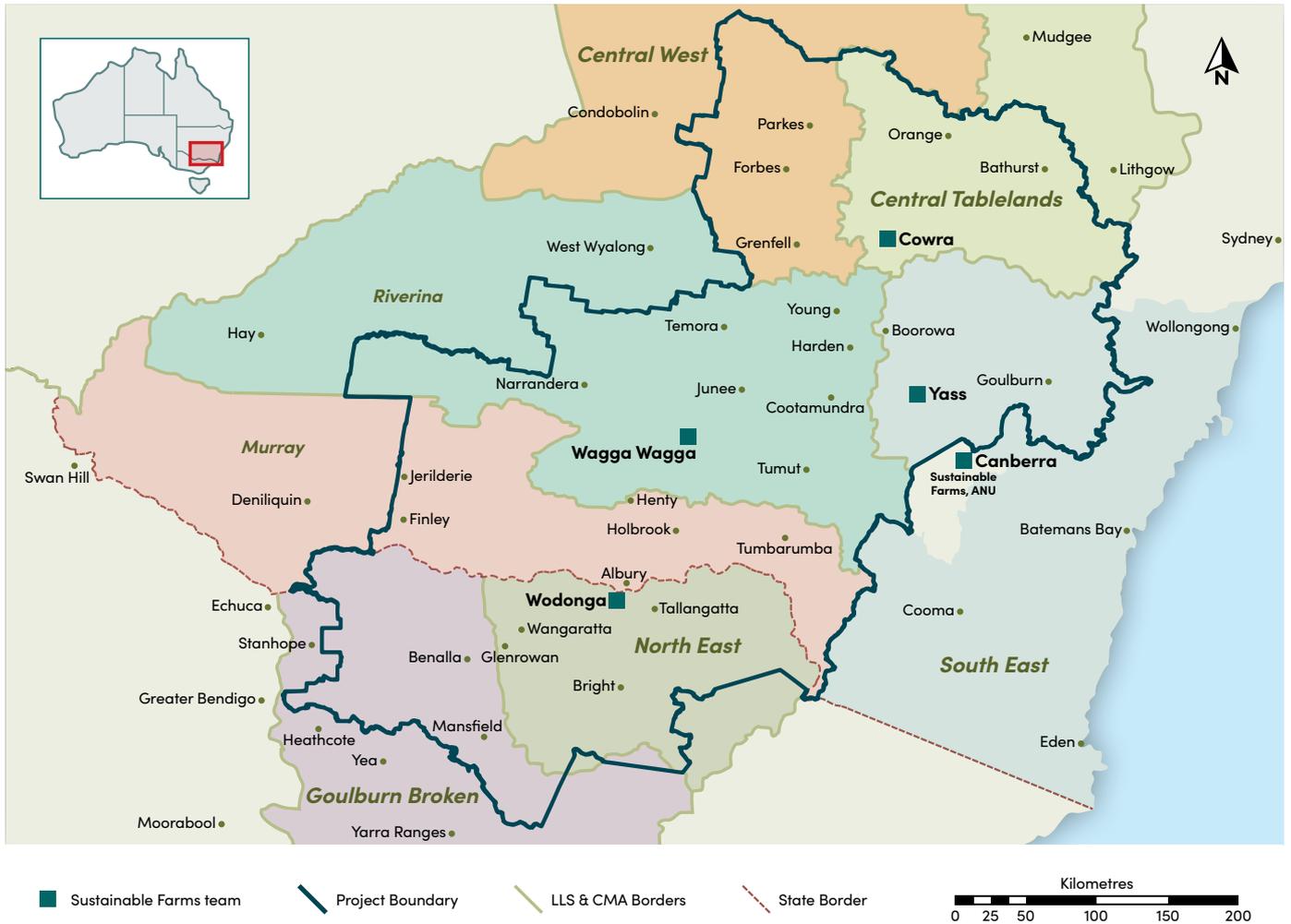
The strategic objectives of the Sustainable Farms initiative (and the proposed Centre for Woodland Biodiversity on Farms) are supported by effective management and implementation.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure monitoring and evaluation practices are embedded in the project and support adaptive management
- Develop a fundraising strategy to achieve long-term success at scale (\$2M+ per annum)
- Build a learning environment within the project to support innovation and team development
- Develop a work culture that is inclusive and engaging
- Support and mentor emerging leaders in research from a range of disciplines across The Australian National University who seek to work on the conservation of woodland biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.



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

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

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