

Australia strengthens National Soil Action Plan 2023-28, a first five-year plan

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The National Soil Action Plan 2023-28 is the first five-year plan under the 20-year National Soil Strategy, released in 2021, and sets out four priority actions to guide partner activities and investments in soil.

Minister Watt said the new action plan identifies key focus areas to respond to challenges such as climate change. He added, "Soil is central to Australia's agricultural industry and central to our government's climate ambitions. After a decade of inaction, the agricultural industry finally has a government that is matching its ambition on climate action and improving soil quality is a key part of this strategy. It also plays an important part in our economy, food security, infrastructure, and regional communities. Soil type, usage and challenges are highly variable, so management of this national asset requires practical, localised planning and responses. As the first action plan under the 20-year National Soil Strategy, it is important that we build on the great initiatives that have already occurred in soil management and set solid foundations for future actions to improve soil health."

The action plan is the result of strong collaboration by the federal and state and territory governments.

"The National Soil Action Plan is a great example of what we can achieve nationally when we work together. It has been developed in partnership with the soil science and research community, non-government organisations, regional natural resource management organisations, industry bodies and the private sector. The action plan is supported by \$20 million announced in the 2023-24 Budget for bilateral partnership agreements with the states and territories to deliver locally

appropriate activities. These activities provide clear and measurable progress against the four key priorities of the plan. The action plan is also supported by \$36 million under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program as part of the Natural Heritage Trust" â?• Minister Watt said.

The program will establish a national soil monitoring program, strengthen the Australian National Soil Information System, continue the work of the regional soil coordinators and support the National Soil Community of Practice.

The four priority actions of the National Soil Action Plan 2023-28 include:

1. Develop an agreed national framework to support the measurement, monitoring, mapping reporting and sharing of soil state and trends information, to inform best management decision making and future investment in soil.
2. Develop a holistic policy and strategy approach where soil function is recognised, valued and protected for the environment, economy, food, infrastructure, health, biosecurity and communities.
3. Accelerate the adoption of land use and management practices that protect soil and improve soil state and trends.
4. Identify and develop the soil workforce and capabilities need to meet current and future challenges for Australia and our region.