The following headings are examples of research and field work that MSF have completed and link with the Healthy Soils Project:

1. Increased cropping intensity – Understanding your paddock’s nitrogen availability is critical when it comes to managing more intensive crop rotations. Nitrogen availability depends on the nitrogen taken off in the previous season’s grain, rain events over summer and the amount of retained stubbles. Keeping an eye on these will give you valuable insights into the nitrogen you will need to put on during sowing (see farmtalk #2 Intensify Cropping - Improve your Profitability and How do we manage Nitrogen in Mallee Soils).

2. Tillage selection – The selection of minimum and no-till is important when considering managing wind erosion, but it seems to be less important when it comes to achieving your potential yield (see farmtalk #12 Getting into No-Till in the Mallee).

3. Soil available moisture – Knowing the available moisture at sowing provides a great edge when it comes to managing your cropping program and hence business profits. Soil moisture can be measured either by soil testing or by monitoring moisture use from the previous year and measuring summer rainfall (see farmtalk #24 Measuring Your Own Soil Moisture to Better Target Yield Potential).

4. Electromagnetic (EM) Mapping – The challenge of taking the MSF trial results and duplicating them on your paddocks requires knowing your soil variability. EM mapping can help you...
to understand your paddocks better. This will lead to investing the correct inputs onto that part of the paddock that will give you the best returns (see farmtalk # 23 Making use of EM in the Mallee).

**What it means**
The information and knowledge of soil health that already exists is vast, yet we often do not know where to find it. The Healthy Soils for Sustainable Farms project will improve access to and knowledge of soil health in the Mallee region. The objectives of the project are:

- To improve farmers’ capacity to manage soil health issues.
- To identify appropriate soil management strategies, both at a landscape and industry level.
- Enhance, to develop and to deliver data and information packages for farmers.
- To develop and promote industry based training packages.

The long term aim is for farmers and advisers to have greater confidence to manage soil health for increased farm productivity.

As existing information is collated, it will be used to deliver workshops on various soil health topics for both farmers and private and public advisors. Information packages will also be made available, and where appropriate, the information will be accessible online. Victorian Resource Online (VRO) is where information on many soil topics is available to the public. Check their website at: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/vro.

For the MSF project area the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Farms project will mean continuation of structured industry based training on soil topics to improve farmers’ and advisers’ knowledge and skills to better manage soil health in the farming system. The workshops will provide greater access to information and resources for Mallee farmers.

**Where to next**
Interested in attending a workshop on one of the several soil health topics? There are nine soil health workshops to attend:

1. Understanding Soil Health
2. Understanding Soil Type
3. Understanding Soil Structure
4. Understanding Soil Tests – Chemical
5. Understanding Soil Biology
7. Managing Subsoil Constraints
8. Understanding Soil Erosion
9. Water Use Efficiency

**Soil Sampling in the Millewa**

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