



Industry, agronomists and farmers working together to enable improved fertiliser use

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By bringing together farmers with locally respected agronomists under the Australian dairy industry's natural resource management strategy "Dairying for Tomorrow", the project aimed to improve farmers knowledge of soil fertility and their skills to interpret soil test results leading to changes in farm management practices.

Techniques used included:

- group facilitation and empowerment
- individual consultant mentor

A creative and supportive social environment was actively emphasised using farmer-to-farmer engagement.

Improving knowledge and skills

- 96% of respondents (30) found that the project had improved their knowledge of soil fertility.
- 90% of respondents (28) said that the soil testing had provided them with a better understanding of soil acidity.
- 66% of respondents (19) noted that the soil testing had identified areas of low pH (soil acidity) that they were not previously aware of.
- Five participants (17%) noted that the soil testing had identified areas of soil salinity that they were not previously aware of.

Improving management practices

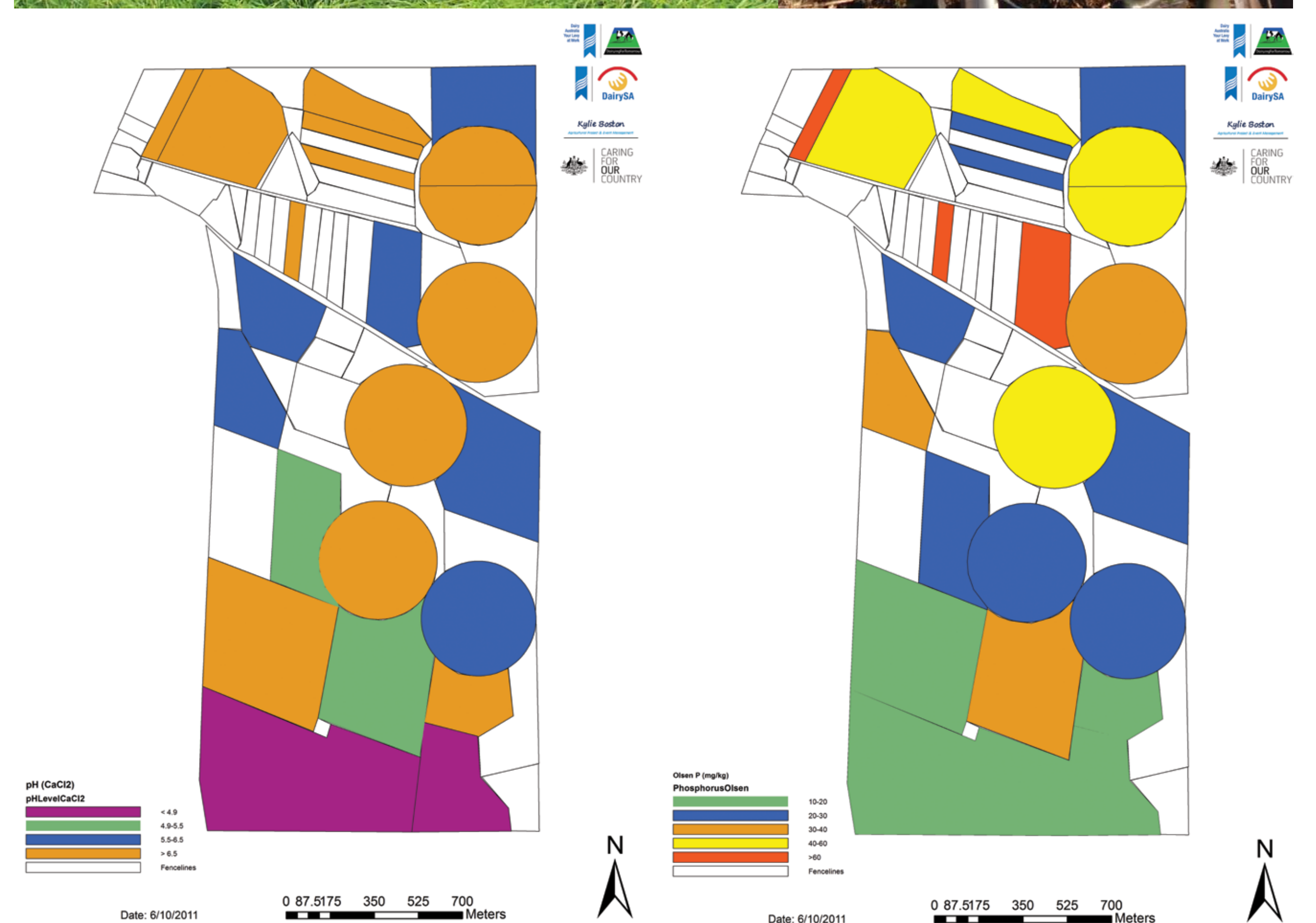
- On 90% of participant farms (27) the soil testing has resulted in a change to the farm fertiliser plan.
- 75% of farms (24) plan to undertake practices to manage soil acidity this year.

Improved knowledge and skills in service providers

- Each agronomist surveyed believed that the project improved their knowledge of soil fertility and assisted them to plan their nutrient application recommendations.
- All identified that they would encourage increasing the number of soil tests their clients take.

Three key learnings

- Group facilitation supports individual change.
- The use of credible tools increases confidence to change.
- Bringing farmers and agronomists together is a valuable approach in a competitive environment.



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