

**Monday 21 January 2008**

## **Improving our health from the soil up**

IT was a promise Graeme Sait made to his daughter that first put him on the path towards biological agriculture and next month he will share his knowledge during a public information session and three-day workshop in Taree.

The concept sounds so simple – improving soil to increase yield and quality and reduce pest attack, while improving human nutrition – but a reliance on chemicals has clouded the way forward.

Graeme Sait has travelled the world running workshops on biological agriculture (last month he was in China and he is currently planning a trip to Cuba) but next month will take the time to visit Taree to share his knowledge.

He will conduct a public information session, instigated by the Manning and Karuah Great lakes Landcare Management Committee, at Taree West Bowling Club at 7.30pm on Tuesday February 12 and a biological agriculture workshop from February 12 to 14. The first two days of the workshop will be information sessions at the Taree Tourist Information Centre and the last day will be a field visit.

It was 19 years ago that Graeme's six-year-old daughter was hit by a speeding motorist and later lapsed into a coma. He promised himself that if she recovered he would dedicate his life to helping the community.

When, beyond all hope, his daughter did emerge from her coma, his background in soil science and passion for nutrition led him towards the field of biological agriculture.

"We have 20 per cent of the nutrition in our food that our grandparents had."

The basis of biological agriculture is all about improving soil fertility and thereby minimising chemical intervention to produce more nutrient dense food vital for human health.

"It's all about balance in the soil and rebuilding what's been lost after five or six decades of chemical agriculture."

Graeme says there are three minerals that almost all Australians are deficient in: magnesium, zinc and selenium and these deficiencies are linked to major diseases such as heart disease and prostate cancer.

Behind Graeme's visit to the area next month is local biological farming enthusiast Bob McDonnell who spent just over 30 years dairy farming on the family farm at Kundle Kundle.

"Anyone who wishes to live a healthier life with less medical expenses should be listening to what Bob has to say," he said about the upcoming visit.

While the three-day workshop will be targeted at farmers and other food producers the Tuesday evening workshop is open to the general public.

Graeme will talk about human nutrition and what we can all do (even if we aren't involved with the soil and producing food) to improve our nutrition.

"Everyone's got somebody in the family with heart disease or cancer and there's a growing recognition that this should be looked at from a nutritional perspective," he says.

The February workshop is part of a year-long project funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust through the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

"CMAs were established to engage rural communities in key natural resource management issues facing their catchments and improving soil health is clearly of importance to producers across the Manning," Chairman of the Hunter-Central Rivers CMA, Dr Wej Paradice said.

The public information session is free of charge and open to the public but costs are involved with the three-day workshop and bookings are essential by calling Albert Mullen at the Karuah Great Lakes Landcare office, Nabiac on 6554 1655.

**ENDS**

**For more information contact the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority's Community Education Manager,  
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