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Healthy Soil — Healthy Plants — Healthy Livestock

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Media release

Forget the chemical experiments MAF – wake up and smell the humus

Parties with vested interests in the fertiliser industry will be rubbing their hands together at MAF's draft options for tackling the crisis threatening sustainable farming.

With rising nitrate levels already poisoning our soils, MAF is considering investing in conventional fertiliser technology to address the meltdown. The solution, according to biological agriculture proponents BioAgNz, is far simpler and right in front of our eyes.

BioAgNZ today calls on MAF to wake up to the “win-win” benefits of biological farming methods that enrich soil nutrients and increase profits for farmers.

The call comes in response to MAF's consultation document on Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change options.

“While we commend MAF for this policy initiative, they have failed to recognise that sustainable land management solutions are already being applied by farmers and growers involved with biological agriculture,” says Phyllis Tichinin, founder of BioAgNZ.

Biological agriculture is a mix of conventional and organic farming practices involving careful crop and soil monitoring to ensure optimum yields, nutritional density and humus production. It focuses on re-establishing mineral balance and enhancing beneficial microbiology in the soil.

Pioneering farmers in New Zealand and around the world have increased profitably and enriched soils through rethinking the ‘chemical warfare’ approach to farming and trialling biological farming. BioAgNZ argues that government funding should be directed towards helping more farmers explore the benefits of biological agriculture, rather than investing in conventional fertiliser technology that has already failed us.

“Conventional fertilisers and pesticides have degraded New Zealand soils and affected both livestock health and produce quality. This ‘chemical culture’ has also led to higher carbon emissions, drench resistance, erosion and poor water quality,” says Phyllis Tichinin.

“Profit is dropping as animal health costs soar and soils become harder to work. Seventy percent of dairy farmers lost money last year, we have increasing rates of fertiliser application for declining yields of questionable quality and pastoral farmers are struggling. Our squash, apples and kiwifruit markets are telling us our produce lacks flavour and doesn't store well.



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“Agricultural science has been directed over the last 50 years by the narrow spectrum chemical fertiliser agenda. We have forgotten the basic sciences of biology, chemistry and physics as they apply to soil. We are in a downward spiral and a very different approach is needed.

“It all has to do with the way we are feeding our soils. Re-establish humus levels through broad spectrum fertilisation practices that are microbiology friendly, and the whole system comes right with greater productivity, fewer emissions, more carbon sequestering and better profits. This is happening already on the ground on farms in New Zealand.

“Biological and organic farming is booming around the world and is being enthusiastically embraced by farmers and growers around New Zealand. It is increasing yields and significantly decreasing animal health costs. What is needed here is a return to basic soil education for farmers. Empower farmers with understanding of the basic sciences behind soil function.”

BioAgNZ also suggests the Government could create a tax credit for humus creation as part of its commitment to address climate change.

“Humus creation and plant nutrient density as indicated by brix are the most potent indicators that the soil system is balanced and sequestering carbon,” said Phyllis Tichinin.

“New Zealand has a tremendous business opportunity to provide nutritionally dense, tasty, long-storing, pesticide-free produce for a discerning world market that is happy to pay a premium and ignore food mile implications if the product is truly excellent.

“This result is being achieved by biological farming and depends on improving soil microbe and humus levels. Tax credits for using bio friendly fertilisers would back up the ‘clean green’ rhetoric with real incentives for farmers to re-establish soil biology and fertility.”

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For more information and photo opportunities call Dale Cowie Communications on (06) 875 0393 or 021 401097.