

# [***Carbon plan boosts Dederang soil health***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPP-T651-JD34-V061-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Land

April 4, 2024 Thursday

Print Edition

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**Section:** NONE; Pg. 24

**Length:** 505 words

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**Body**

So far as John McEvoy is concerned, the main problem with carbon-based climate-warming emissions, is there's not enough being captured in our ***soils***.

"Without the necessary microbes, plants require synthetic fertilisers to reach full productivity," he says, when describing his approach to ***soil health***.

He and wife Sharon have taken on the family farm at Dederang, Vic.

To counter what they see as an apparent lack of natural ***soil*** life, they have taken a new direction inspired by the writing of respected Australian ***soil*** biologist, Dr Christine Jones, as well as landholders who have successfully restored landscape function.

"Nature has given us the answer for thousands of years and Dr Jones wrote - 'if we put enough carbon in the ground, we would have fewer emissions to deal with'," Mr McEvoy said.

The McEvoys began down this path 2 1/2 years ago, with the intention to maximise the amount of carbon stored in their ***soils***, but also to reduce their reliance on and long-term synthetic fertilser use.

"For us it is about regenerating ***soil***, growing healthy plants and producing healthy food," Mr McEvoy said.

"We sow multi-species cover crops into existing pasture swards and they form symbiotic relationships. And by inoculating the seed with beneficial microbiology, we can grow amazingly healthy crops nearly all year round."

"We are doing this because we have learnt its going to be better for our ***soil***, our animals and our ***health*** because we are not using any chemicals or chemical fertilisers.

"And also because this is a crucial alternative to all of the renewable energy structures that we think are a short term fix when we could be putting carbon in the ground.

"People like Dr Christine Jones say if we can get enough people doing this kind of farming then we wouldn't need to worry about our emissions to anywhere near the same extent, because it is not the carbon in the air that's the problem but it's the lack of carbon in the ***soil***."

Although they are only two and half years into a lifelong project, the McEvoys can see immediate benefits in the paddocks they have thus far treated.

"We are growing crops to sequester the carbon and in the process our stock are very healthy, but we are also noting less run-off from those paddocks because the ***soil*** is able to soak up the rain more effectively," Mr McEvoy said.

"We are getting close to growing green crops all year round and absolutely enjoying the excitement of it.

"We have also found that building ***soil*** carbon improves ***soil*** structure, which allows better water infiltration and encouraging plants to cycle nutrients."

The McEvoys also point to other mentors beside Dr Jones, including farmer and speaker, Gabe Brown, Bismark, North Dakota, Montana-based Kiwi advisor, Nicole Masters, and president of the Victorian No Till Famers Association, Grant Simms.

"Our basic principles are no till, maintenance of thick ground cover, diversity of plants, living roots as long as possible and high stocking density while rotating our stock around the small paddocks," Mr McEvoy said.

**Load-Date:** April 3, 2024

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