



New Project: MLA Towards Optimal Out-of-Season Feed Supply

Project background

Southern Dirt Inc, in collaboration with Meat & Livestock Australia, Stirlings to Coast Farmers and the Farm Optimisation Group, is excited to announce a new project set to innovate how out-of-season feed management can be achieved in the Great Southern region.

This project will look at the best economic use of salt land pasture and standing fodder crops to meet producers needs when they face difficult seasonal feed gaps within their production.

Beginning in November 2024, the project will run for 2.5 years, due to be completed in March 2027.

Project aims and objectives

This project will showcase the Farm Optimiser Platform, an advanced economic decision-support tool developed by the Farm Optimisation Group. This platform will allow producers to have a direct understanding of the management of their relevant fodder sources and provide best farm management practices. The platform aims to answer critical questions that affect the management of fodder crops and salt bush within their production such as fodder establishment, grazing timing, grazing duration, stock class, supplementation, and economic impacts. The platform aims to boost profitability and farm resilience.

The project will engage a core group of 15-20 producers across Southern Dirt and Stirlings to Coast grower groups. Through practical demonstrations and collaborative efforts, the project aims to drive wider adoption and provide farmers with appropriate knowledge and tools for sustainable integration of such practices within their farming systems.

Project Methodology

The project will consist of 4 host sites to showcase the practical integration of fodder and shrubs within farming systems. The host sites will also be used to

demonstrate how the Farm Optimiser Platform can be leveraged to improve management. Host producers who already incorporate salt land pasture and/or fodder crops as part of their strategy to address the summer feed gap will be chosen. To support the workshops and extension messages, the site host producers, with guidance from Southern Dirt, will collect essential production data during the Summer grazing period. This data will include biomass measurements before grazing, grazing days provided, supplements fed, and stock condition at the beginning and end of the grazing period. The host producers will store the data locally and share it with the group during two workshops.

During the first year (2024-2025), site hosts will demonstrate the use of the feed base options under their current management plan. During the second year (2026), site hosts will demonstrate the use of the feed base options under a refined management plan derived from leveraging the Farm Optimiser during the project workshops.

Two field days will be held during the project (one per year) to demonstrate the project findings and educate the wider farming community.

Does this project interest you?

Get involved with us!

If you are interested in being a part of this project as a core/host or observer producer, please get in contact with Southern Dirt's project officer, Codie. By being an observer or host, you will become part of a Whatsapp group with other local producers invested in this project, with the ability to attend workshops, upskilling in the use of the Farm Optimisation Platform, and work with other producers who are utilising fodder and salt land pasture to fill the feed gap.

