

Acid Soil Action in NSW

LEAFLET NO. 1
2nd Edition

The Acid Soil Action (ASA) Program is an initiative of the NSW Government and administered by NSW Agriculture. The program provides funds to help the agricultural and fishing communities, their associated industries, universities, local government, catchment management boards and government agencies. The aim is to better manage two of the major forms of soil degradation in NSW:

- Acidification of soils as it effects, and is affected by, agricultural production.
- Pollution of the waterways on the coast by exposure of acid sulfate soils. This part of the ASA Program is called the Acid Sulfate Soil Program (ASSPRO). For information about ASSPRO and acid sulfate soils contact the ASS Project officers (see Contacts, next page.)

ASA began in 1997 with a grant from the NSW Government to NSW Agriculture of \$7.5m to be spent over three years. In recognition of the gravity of the problem — and the work already done by the program — the State Government has again funded the ASA Program up until June 2003.

THE COST OF SOIL ACIDITY TO COMMUNITY

In NSW 13.7m hectares of agricultural land is seriously affected by soil acidification. A further 6m hectares will develop serious acid soil problems if agricultural practices are not changed.

Soil acidity reduces pasture and crop growth, biodiversity and opportunities for enterprise flexibility. Estimates of the cost of soil acidity to NSW vary between \$90m and \$225m per year.

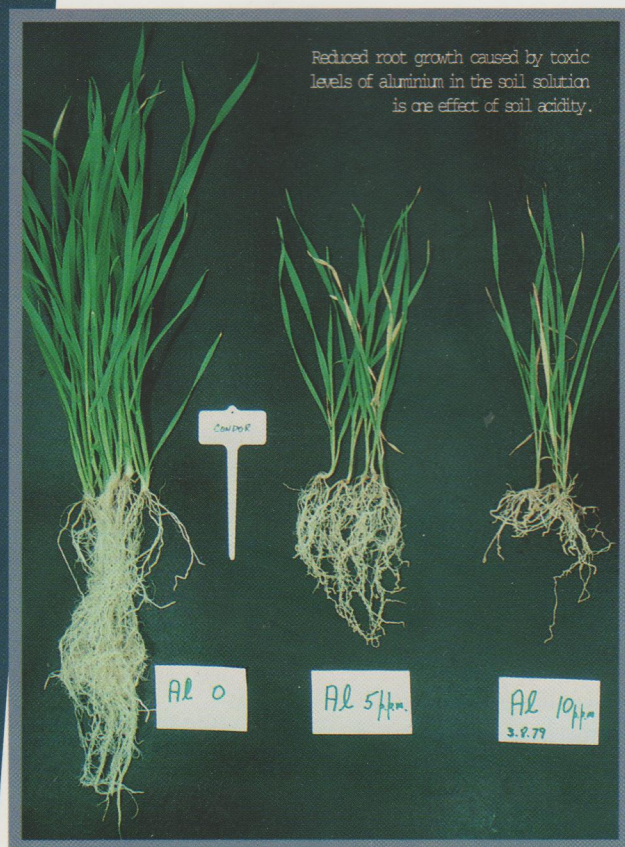
Soil acidity has impacts beyond agricultural production. Dryland salinity, nitrate pollution of ground water, soil erosion, phosphorus leakage into streams and damage to roads from rising water tables, are all problems that increase as soil acidity becomes more severe.

THE ASA (AGRICULTURE) PROGRAM

The aim of the ASA (Agriculture) Program is to correct soil acidity. However, where significant economic constraints are encountered, the aim is to reduce the adverse effect of acidity on agricultural production and the environment.

The ASA (Agriculture) Management Committee administers the program. This committee has representatives from the farming community, the lime crushing industry, catchment management boards and government agencies. This ensures local ownership and management of the program.

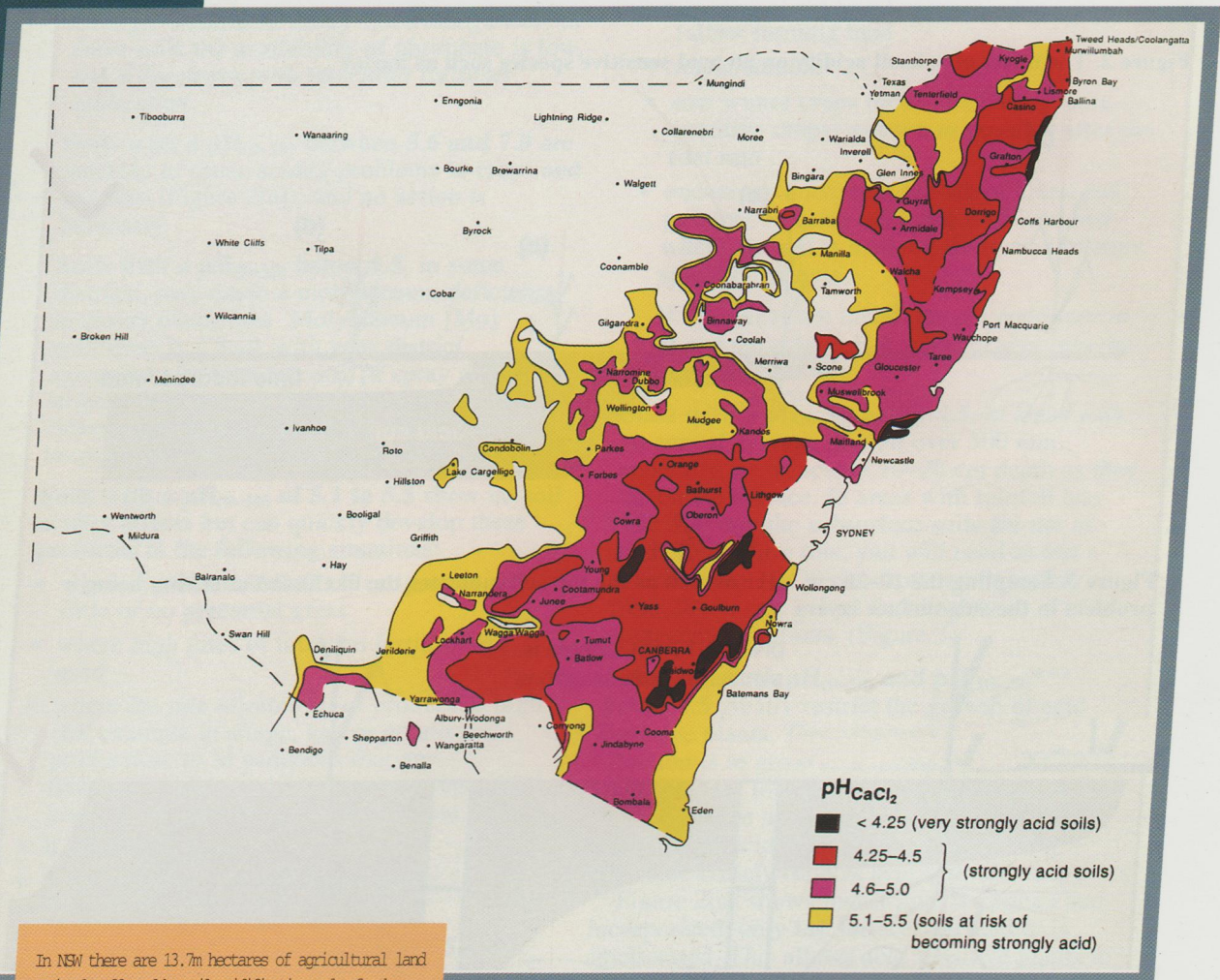
Two extension specialists are employed within the program. They support research projects, initiate extension activities, produce technical bulletins, and provide training in acid soil management for private and public sector agencies.



NSW Agriculture



Acid Soil
ACTION
An Initiative of NSW Government



In NSW there are 13.7m hectares of agricultural land seriously affected by soil acidification and a further 6m hectares at risk of developing acidity problems.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

ASA (Agriculture) will produce a clear picture of the extent and severity of soil acidity in NSW. It will determine whether — and if so by how much — acid soils are affecting the environment beyond the acidified site. It will produce a wide range of options to manage this mostly invisible form of soil degradation.

Specific outcomes will be:

- More sustainable management of acid soils in the tablelands permanent pasture zones.
- Correction of soil acidity in the cropping, irrigation and horticultural areas.
- Recognition of soil acidity and how it can be managed in the northern inland.
- Links established with the farming community, the catchment management boards, private enterprise and government to advance sustainable agriculture.

THE FIRST THREE YEARS

The ASA (Agriculture) Management Committee in the first three years funded 60 community group projects and 30 research and advisory projects. These addressed the three key areas nominated in the Program:

- Community education and extension.
- Development of improved management systems.
- Community incentives for sustainable management of acid soils.

ASA (Agriculture) attracted a further \$10.1m from stakeholders to develop acid soil research and management. A full report is available from the Project Coordinator.

THE NEXT THREE YEARS

In 2000-01 the ASA (Agriculture) Management Committee is funding 18 new and continuing research projects and 17 new community projects. The ASA Program will also fund 12 soil testing workshops and three landscape management workshops - as well as maintaining many of the community projects that were funded in the past three years.

NEW ASA PROGRAMS

The ASA (Agriculture) Management Committee strongly supports two new programs to help farmers develop the knowledge and skills needed to manage acid soils on their own farms.

ASA soil test interpretation program

This is a program for farmers and graziers. It will assist in developing a comprehensive picture of the soil properties for each farm, and help the farmer develop a better understanding of soils. The program is made up of three workshops.

- Instruction on collection of soils samples.
- Physical soil testing.
- Interpreting chemical soil testing.

LANDSCAN

Landscan is a series of workshops on landscape and soil management for landholders in the tablelands and slopes areas. The six half-day workshops shows how to manage soils and landscapes, based on soil testing and landscape analysis. The course has been designed to complement other programs such as Prograze and Property Management Planning.

CONTACTS

Enquires on how to develop a project for funding by the ASA Program, or suggestions about how the program could further tackle the acid soil problem, are welcome. The people to contact are:

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DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (September 2001). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Agriculture or the user's independent adviser.