



The Importance of Creating a Resilient Farm

The opposite to resilience is to be vulnerable which in essence means open to attack at all levels! And when we are under attack we respond - sometimes inappropriately, dealing with the immediate problem rather than planning and preparing our defence.

The changing weather patterns over the last decade or so has placed many good farmers into receivership, others have sold whilst others have simply given up and now lease out their land. On the other hand there are farmers who have survived and survived well due to their acquired knowledge to plan and manage well.

So let's look at how we can plan and prepare for the extremes in the weather so that your farm withstands whatever conditions prevail in the future.

First and foremost is maintaining

- adequate carbon stocks in the landscape,
- good plant diversity and ground cover and
- holistic animal management.

Secondly is withholding the use of any product that reduces the ability of the soil to function biologically. These products are generally synthetic chemicals such as weedicides, fertilisers, pesticides and antibiotics and other animal drenches.

The farms that have performed well throughout the drought all display these practices. In effect it means that there is minimal ground disturbance, native plants and grasses are encouraged to regenerate, animal grazing periods are carefully monitored to maintain strong root development of the plants and stock holdings are kept at sustainable levels. Water is therefore retained through many means.

The result is that the soils on these farms grow good topsoil which in turn allows water penetration and moisture is retained in the soil structure which has built up humus levels. Any groundcover in the form of plants and litter is encouraged as it helps to collect moisture from any dews that form. This retained moisture therefore softens the extremes of the weather and extends the growing period.

Emphasis is also placed on sustainability so a balance is kept between maintaining good plant growth and stock holdings. When not over stocking long term profits are increased by allowing strong plant growth and the building of healthy, active friable soils. Profits are made by not needing to supplement feed and through the use of no chemicals the plant growth is healthy thus leading to healthy animals!

Farming Secrets says: Take steps to become proactive

Ref: Alan Lauder who is author of the book Carbon_Grazing.