

Whole farm planning

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Whole farm plan

A whole farm plan identifies different natural and built characteristics of your farm enabling you to match management and appropriate land use to these.

The natural characteristics of the farm may include resources such as soils, landforms, water bodies, historical and cultural features, native vegetation and biodiversity.

A whole farm plan does not have to be a complicated document nor is it static. It can be prepared by yourself, through an accredited course or with the help of a consultant.

Its overall objective is about achieving sustainable land management on your farm. Farm planning helps identify environmental issues and concerns and legislative requirements. It explores practical and cost effective solutions to addressing these problems while minimizing the impact on the environment and your risk of litigation. It is an evolving document which should be reviewed and updated annually.

A whole farm plan typically includes:

1. Whole farm objectives
2. Property map and farm history
3. Natural resource inventory and assessment
4. Action plan

Objectives

A whole farm plan clearly outlines what are your family goals and business objectives. Your objectives define what you would like to see the future condition of your farm look like while reflecting the underlying resources available to you on your farm.

Property map and farm history

The collection of data about your farm and its operation is essential to developing a whole farm plan. A summary of farming operations (cropping and grazing history including infrastructure development) and climatic information should be recorded in your farm plan.

Whole farm plans also typically have a satellite base map of your farm with the location of your property boundary and built and natural features identified on the map.

The built features may include access points, field boundaries and sub divisions, channels, storages, fence lines, power lines, sheds houses etc. The natural features may include location of different soil types, water bodies and vegetation types. Also recorded on the map is the location of any proposed future works. Refer to factsheet *Preparing a farm map* for more information.





Resource inventory and assessment

A resource assessment contains descriptive information about the natural resources on your property including what regulatory constraints apply to these natural resources.

It collates as much information as possible about the characteristics and condition of your natural resources and considers any opportunities as well as potential problems and possible actions for mitigating these.

The type of features that may be included in this resource assessment include:

- Native vegetation and biodiversity (including threatened or endangered species or habitats)
- Soil types (including land degradation issues such as erosion and salinity)
- Water bodies (rivers, creeks, billabongs & wetlands)
- Biosecurity (weeds and pests)
- Historical and cultural heritage features
- Climatic variability (rainfall, access to water, drought)

Action plan

The action plan is a prioritisation of management actions as a response to the opportunities and problems identified through the continual monitoring and evaluation of the whole farm plan.

Using BMP's and/or working with your local extension officers and authorities the Action plans articulate the issue, cost, labour, timeframe and resources required to implement individual management actions to meet the family and farms vision for the future.

References & further reading

Below is a list of websites with resources and courses which may be useful to you when developing your whole farm plan:

- www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/business-management/whole-farm-planning

