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## **HAS YOUR SOIL HAD A HEALTH CHECK?**

Everyone recognises the importance of being healthy. When you eat healthy food, in quantities appropriate for your age and body size, and combine this with adequate sleep and exercise, it's a recipe for a healthy, enjoyable lifestyle. Conversely, when you eat too much unhealthy food, and/or you don't get enough sleep or exercise, there's a very good chance that your health will suffer. This is a self-evident, common sense truth. Despite this, much of the human population is either ignorant of, or disregards this truth. Whatever the reason, the result for such people is the same – poor health, lack of wellness and increased medical costs.

In the same way, soils can also be healthy or unhealthy. This should also be a self-evident truth, given that your soil is the foundation of all that you do as a farmer or grower. When your soil is healthy and functioning in an optimal manner, then the plants that are growing in that soil will grow better and be more healthy, and whatever animals are grazing those plants will also be healthier and “do better.”

A strange peculiarity of humans is that often those who are unhealthy are unaware of their true condition. It's not till they suffer a stroke, heart attack etc or undertake some kind of medical diagnostic test, that the real state of their ill-health becomes clear to them. The same situation also occurs with your soil. Most of the time, for most farmers, the assumption is that everything is fine. They may take a soil test to assess the nutrient status of P, K & S and a few other basic parameters. Other than that, the assumption is that the soil is healthy.

The reality may be altogether different. If you are serious about having a healthy soil, it's vital to also consider the soil biology and soil physical properties. Every soil is the dynamic result of the interaction of the soil chemical, biological and physical properties. Good soil nutrient levels are important but do not automatically equate to fertility and soil health.

So, before you order your fertiliser this spring, consider getting a soil health check. Consider such expenditure as more of an investment than a cost. For, if the information you get back helps you to optimise your soil health, improve production, and reduce your fertiliser spend, not only will you have a better picture of the health of your soil, you may actually end up saving yourself some money as well.