

Soils For Life focuses on capturing more rain through better land management

[Lara Webster](#) Posted 6 March 2017 at 3:25 pm

How do you capture every rain drop from the sky, how is it possible and what difference would that make for our farmers?

The Soils For Life organisation is determined to work out how it can capture more rain for Australian farmers and the landscape.

Their work is based on the 100-drop scenario developed by a scientist called Walter Jehne, as explained by Soils For Life chief of staff Natalie Williams.

"For every 100 drops of rain that fall on Australian landscapes and soils, these drops can be divided up according to where they end up," Ms Williams said.

"Thirty-six drops go into the landscape itself, of that 30 go to vegetation, keeping grass green and trees growing and only six of those drops go into recharging the aquifers."

Another 14 drops of the 100 go into creeks and rivers and eventually out to sea or Lake Eyre, depending on where you are located.

Capturing the extra rain

However, the other 50 or so drops to land on Australian soil evaporate into the atmosphere and that is where the problems lie.

A UN report predicts that by 2030 world water demand might outrun supply by as much as 40 per cent.

When addressing a grazier forum in Mackay in North Queensland, Ms

Williams said there needed to be more emphasis on how the drops were wasted and evaporated back into the atmosphere.

If there was better management of the rehydration of farming land to help capture the extra rain, Ms Williams believed the difference made to Australian agriculture could be exponential.

"[It] requires landscape management on a modern sort of scale and it means that we do things to the landscape to make that water soak back into the soils," she said.

"That can be done in various ways across the different agricultural sectors ... rotational grazing, planting grasses that allow root mass to go deep into soils.

"You need to slow the rate of water flow across landscapes, once you do that it will then soak in and be utilised much better than it is at the moment."

Noticeable and achievable results

In Ms William's own case, she has seen dramatic effects on her on Western Queensland cattle property from the improvement of her land management.

She said on her property, 150 years of damage from clearing and bad farming had be reversed in 15 years, with more vegetation and now a greater carrying capacity.

"We were able to change the carrying capacity from 100 head in 1994 to around 3,000 head over the course of about 15 years," Ms Williams said.

"By managing than landscape properly you also pick up profitability, environmental outcomes, resistance to disease, resilience after drought

[and] being able to manage high rainfall events.

"It is actually a triple bottom line benefit to improving and rehydrating landscapes," she said.