

Abstract

The second Queensland soil management training workshop was held in May 1992 at Emerald. Funding came from the National Soil Conservation Program. The aim of the workshop was to improve the soil advisory skills of local consultants and agronomists by enhancing their skills both in observing and recording soil structure and in producing advisory recommendations based on these observations. This was a first step in redressing the discrepancy between the high incidence of soil structure problems observed in cropping lands and the lack of personnel able to advise on repair and prevention programs.

Twenty-two private and Government agronomists and industry consultants from Biloela, Emerald, Rockhampton and Theodore attended the two day course. Officers of QDPI and N.S.W. Department of Agriculture tutored the participants in the use of SOILPAK, a decision support manual of N.S.W. Department of Agriculture for agronomists and farmers when considering various soil management strategies. Soil profile descriptions were recorded in backhoe pits at 8 field sites, and these were interpreted in terms of the soil's chemical data and site management records. Group discussions at each site covered the need, timeliness, type and possible benefits of structure repair programs.

The workshop demonstrated that compaction and strategies for repairing compaction were poorly understood, but that the phenomenon was readily observed and could be interpreted sensibly in terms of site history. Also, it was evident that the participants quickly comprehended the problem and saw the economic necessity of prevention and cure.

The **principal recommendations** of the workshop were that (i) more of these training courses be run for agronomists/consultants so they can provide support to farmers making decisions on the need and timeliness of their cultivations, firmly based on an assessment of the current state of soil condition; (ii) future workshops should investigate and resolve local soil management problems; and (iii) the sites visited in this workshop should be part of the State-wide monitoring network of soil compaction.

The next soil management training workshop is planned for May 1993 in the sugar lands of coastal Queensland, and will attract participants from Grafton, N.S.W. to Cairns, Queensland.