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Welcome to the latest edition of **Vitality**, AgVita's newsletter for our valued customers. It's pleasing to finally hear reports of good rain across most parts of Australia as the extended dry appears over for now. However, many regions are still heavily in deficit and will require prolonged rainfall to both fill profiles and allow a return to more normal cropping in the following few years. Broadacre crops have been sown with confidence in many regions, and dams are filling in the south.

Following an extended dry spell, soil nutrition should be on the radar, as nutrient levels will behave unexpectedly - some nutrients may remain in paddocks and a simple soil test could save valuable dollars of unnecessary inputs. We also discuss the use of in-crop soil N tests as a guide to making good fertiliser decisions.

Also inside, we highlight an interesting study conducted by Fert\$mart on Tasmanian Dairy farms - only 3% of all farms surveyed had optimum levels of soil nutrients!

AgVita has presented at two national conferences recently - continue reading to hear where, and what was on the agenda.

AgVita congratulates Serve-Ag Pty Ltd on their sale to E.E. Muir & Sons and wish the Group success going forward. AgVita remains independent and privately owned, and is not affected by this business transaction.

As part of a regular review, AgVita has slightly modified our product list. Also, for the first time in nearly 4 years, we have relented and adjusted prices to reflect increased cost of inputs to our business.

And finally, don't forget our popular competition where you can win an excellent bottle of Tasmanian wine by identifying the location of the AgVita staff member in the photos taken on our recent travels. This location might be easy to guess...!

### **Are you applying unnecessary inputs?:**

After a prolonged dry spell, soil inputs from last year's season may not have been fully utilised and could still be available for the upcoming season. The most effective way to determine the nutrient status prior to application is an accredited soil test with AgVita. Turnaround time for an expressSoil complete test (ES22) is no more than five working days from receipt of sample.

ExpressSoil is an accredited and established methodology suitable for use in all areas across the country. It provides all macro and micro nutrients, soil pH, EC and Chloride as well as Total N & C and several useful calculations like CEC, lime requirement, exchangeable acidity, %OM, %meq macro's and %CEC macro's.

An alternative to expressSoil is our Soil Response test - this suite of tests uses proven chemistry and methods, and has a slightly longer turnaround time for results (max 9 days from receipt of samples).

Both test suites have multiple options of analytes and are reported to clients in simple to use, but effective reports that offer guidelines, status and options for fertiliser recommendations.

### **Fert\$mart study of Tasmanian dairy farm soil nutrition:**

A detailed study has recently been published by Fert\$mart, a program initiated by Dairy Australia. Fert\$mart was funded by Dairy Australia and the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program, along with significant additional resources from many other contributing individuals and organisations.

This study commenced in Tasmania in October, 2014, and since then:

- 88 dairy farms registered for Fert\$mart plans (fully subscribed for all funding)
- 80 dairy farms and 1271 paddocks soil sampled to end of February 2016

- Farmers paid for soil testing. DairyTas funding partners (Australian Govt, Tasmanian Govt, NRM North, Cradle Coast NRM and NRM South) paid for adviser time to prepare plans. Worked out to be \$ for \$ matching of funding contribution to farmer contribution.
- Some farms are now into second season of reviewing and updating their Fert\$mart plans and are working with their advisers on an ongoing commercial basis.
- This data is corrected for soil sampling depth to 7.5 cm and consistency in lab methods

Detailed analysis of the results of this study is freely available from AgVita on request, and can be summarised as follows:

District	Northwest	North	Northeast	South	King Island	All districts
No. of farms	32	25	3	9	11	80
No. of paddocks	478	375	51	258	109	1271
Paddocks below optimum pH						14%
Paddocks above optimum pH						2%
Paddocks below optimum P						25%
Paddocks above optimum P						48%
Paddocks below optimum K						24%
Paddocks above optimum K						43%
Paddocks below optimum S						14%
Paddocks above optimum S						38%
No. of paddocks meeting all optimum nutrient levels (3%)						44

Fert\$mart soil tests show that:

- **Only 3% of dairy paddocks were in optimum ranges for all soil fertility indicators** - pH, P, K and S. There is a huge opportunity to improve performance of Tasmanian dairy pastures by strategic application of lime and fertilisers to get more even fertility across farms.
- Soil testing is critical to targeting your fertiliser spend, especially in tight seasons
  - RIGHT PRODUCT, RIGHT RATE, RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE.

A wealth of information is available to drill in to thanks to Fert\$mart - please click on the following link to access:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9tynp3y8lohbox/AABMJ8W4Uzck1vCCwsyD3qHSa?dl=0>

### Measuring nitrogen in soil in-crop:

A fundamental measure of paddock fertility for any crop is the soil Nitrogen level, importantly, the plant-available form of N such as Nitrate and Ammonium. As mentioned above, after a prolonged dry spell soil nutrition may behave differently from previous seasons. Even after a pre-plant soil test, there is a need to monitor soil nitrogen through the life of the crop to determine if sufficient levels of N are available to the crop at key times, and also that excessive levels are not being applied.

AgVita has three options available to monitor available N in soil:

- Dried soil  $\text{NO}_3$  by water extraction
- KCl extraction on dried soil for  $\text{NO}_3$  and  $\text{NH}_4$
- N-check: fresh soil  $\text{NO}_3$  and  $\text{NH}_4$

Please contact AgVita to discuss your preferred option, as results between methods can vary considerably.

### AWITC Event:

AgVita staff recently attended the Australian Wine Industry Technical Conference and Trade Exhibition in Adelaide. This is the premier technical event for the Australian wine industry, and is held only once every 3 years. Attendance at this year's event was in excess of 1500 people, both Australian and international delegates.

Delegates enjoyed four days of plenary sessions, a comprehensive workshop program, large poster display, student forum, and a variety of social events.

AgVita was proud to convene a workshop as part of this year's event, focusing on soil and plant nutrition in



vineyards and how routine analysis can lead to better management decisions. Pictured is Peter Bissell, Chief Winemaker at Balnaves of Coonawarra explaining the story behind his wines that were part of the tasting to conclude our workshop.

Insightful and indeed, futuristic presentations from Dr Ian Porter (LaTrobe University) and brilliant examples of how to use soil and plant data from vineyards in China, Mexico and Australia by Dr Daniel Fischl (Eartrumpet Consulting) as well as a descriptive presentation from AgVita Analytical entertained and engaged the audience of nearly 60 viticulturists, consultants, agronomists and wine makers.

AgVita thanks both Ian and Daniel for their time and commitment to this event, and also Andrew Clarke from Yering Station Wines for supplying wines for tasting.

### **Cotton Australia Conference:**

AgVita was privileged to be part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Australian Cotton Conference, held recently in SE Queensland. This biennial event always attracts a very large crowd, and this year was no exception with nearly 2000 delegates enjoying 3 days of presentations, a massive Trade Show and numerous social events on the Gold Coast.



We were proud to accept an invitation to present a 3-minute thesis (on petiole sap testing in cotton crops) in the program, and a crowd of approx. 230 delegates crowded in to the seminar room to listen to AgVita and several other presenters focusing on crop nutrition (pictured).

With water allocations on the rise, and good soil

moisture levels in many districts, there is a palpable sense of optimism in the Australian cotton industry going in to the new season. Therefore, given how different this season will be from the previous few, plant testing is even more important to provide the best chance of capitalizing on better yields. Nu-test, as well as Plant Response, is a rapid analysis that is ideal in this situation.

### Changes to current Product & Price list:

AgVita has modified our p&p list to reflect better grouping of test suites, with some additions such as pH (CaCl<sub>2</sub>) now standard across the Soil Response range. As some codes may have changed, we encourage all clients to review the new listing on our website ([here](#)) or contact us for an updated pricelist.

### Sale of Serve-Ag Pty Ltd:

As many of you will know, the EE Muir & Sons Group has recently completed the purchase of Serve-Ag Pty Ltd. AgVita was not part of this transaction, and we remain privately, independently owned and operated.

### Name that Location (....or "where's AgVita been now?"):

AgVita staff members have been on the road yet again, travelling to meet existing and new clients across Australia. We proudly bring you yet another round of the "where is AgVita?" competition which again features our love of Big Things.

We have another quality bottle of Tasmanian wine to give away to the lucky winner, and in each newsletter we'll have a new location and a new prize. Get your entries in **before August 22, 2016** by email to [info@agvita.com.au](mailto:info@agvita.com.au)

Unfortunately, we can't claim to have hooked the monster in this picture.... (the monster is on the right!).

The winner will be the best correct identification of the location (as per the instructions below). No clues, but any funny or embarrassing stories linked to the location (or associated piscatorial stories) may sway the judge's opinion....!



**The fine print.....**

Competition is open to all clients and recipients of the Vitality newsletter.

Entrants who inadvertently live in the town/vicinity of the location pictured may not be considered for the prize (unless no other correct entries are received!)

Entries close 7 days after receipt of the newsletter

Winner will be notified by email at the end of the 7 days, prize will be posted out the following day.

Winners details will appear on the AgVita website soon after.

We probably need to keep it to over-18's, but that shouldn't be a problem

If multiple correct entries are received, additional "weight" will be given to entries that describe humorous/odd/interesting/embarrassing event which took place at the location (caution, details may appear in the next newsletter!!)

The judges' decision is final, but we follow the FIFA model for regulations compliance.....