

# RESTORE AUSTRALIA



**PROGRAM BRIEF**



**EverGreening**  
GLOBAL ALLIANCE



# RESTORE AUSTRALIA

A phased approach to restoring Australia's most degraded landscapes

## Why action is needed – now!

In the past 200 years, Australian land use has boosted farming, grazing and agroforestry productivity whilst running down land, water and biodiversity resources, threatening future rural incomes, exports and ecosystem services. Soil erosion, salinisation, scalding and reduced fertility are common. Despite investments in catchments and basins, land degradation is spreading and farm resilience declining. The poor state of natural resources has also aggravated the impacts of drought, fire, flood or other natural disasters, which are increasing in frequency and severity – and threatens the national goal of boosting the value of agricultural produce to \$ 100 billion.

This has never been more evident than the devastating bushfires, which have scorched more than 15 million hectares of the country since September 2019. The fires have caused the devastating loss of at least 29 lives and more than 2,500 homes, the displacement of thousands of people and threatened livelihoods of farmers and rural townships. Furthermore, the fires have been responsible for the loss of at least 1.25 billion livestock and wild animals and long-term damage to many sensitive ecosystems, pushing some species to the brink of extinction. Other consequences of the burnt areas include severe soil erosion, flash flooding, infrastructure damage and sedimentation of reservoirs.

The extremes of our new climate continue to grapple the country, with the remaining fire fronts being extinguished from record-breaking rainfall and flash flooding. We are in a state of emergency, and it is far from over.

## What can we do?

Restoring soil organic carbon (and carbon in perennial trees, shrubs and grass) underpins the recovery from droughts, fires and floods, and draws down atmospheric carbon dioxide to reduce further global warming in Australia, as in other continents. In September 2019 in New York, at the Global Landscapes Forum of the Climate Summit, “EverGreening the Earth - a global campaign to overcome the climate crisis while alleviating poverty and hunger, and caring for the land” was launched. The campaign aims to draw down greenhouse gases, equivalent to 20 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually, by the year 2050.

In Australia, there are many production and resource management technologies which have been shown to reduce emissions and sequester carbon on forest, farms and grazing lands on a small scale in many different agro-ecologies from southern temperate zones to northern monsoon tropics. Australian organisations have also pioneered community-based approaches for training, farmer-to-farmer learning and wider restoration of degraded landscapes which could accelerate the scaling of successful practices.

The Alliance recognises there are a large number of farmers, initiatives, organisations and networks in Australia which have been promoting improved land management, sometimes for decades. The Alliance plans to support the sustained efforts of these movements through targeted resource mobilisation to scale these efforts. In fact, there is a massive opportunity, and an urgent need, to share knowledge of what works where and to invest in targeted scaling of successful grazing, farming and forest restoration technologies.

## **Who's involved?**

The Global EverGreening Alliance (the Alliance) is leading the charge on the “EverGreening the Earth” campaign. The Alliance has over 25 Member Organisations, which includes most of the world's largest development and conservation NGOs, supported by some capable technical and research institutions. In collaboration with governments, UN agencies, donors and multilateral banks, and hundreds of grassroots organisations and movements, it strives to restore land and livelihoods in several continents, whilst tackling the issues of climate change.

## **How is this being done in Australia?**

The Alliance is attracting key stakeholders from across multiple sectors in Australia to design a coordinated land restoration and carbon sequestration program. The platform includes key Australian natural resource management organisations (including Landcare and Greening Australia), conservation organisations, universities, technical specialists, corporations, producers and youth representatives.

Building on existing successes, this initiative seeks to massively scale-up the most impactful and appropriate approaches, while encouraging further innovations to build resilience and tackle the emerging climate extremes facing Australian communities, including the recent bushfire crisis and an extended, and continuing, period of severe drought.

## **When can we expect to see action?**

International donors have committed to invest in a major land restoration and carbon sequestration program in Australia. An initial commitment from an international multilateral foundation is expected to be announced at the Launch of the Restore Australia program on the 11 March 2020.

The Alliance has been working in consultative and participatory ways with a wide range of civil, public and private stakeholders, and harnessing expertise from political, scientific and technical sources, to formulate the program which is designed to start work around mid-year.