

State Soil Health Strategy
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Locked Bag 4, Bentley Delivery Centre WA 6983
via SLCC@dpird.wa.gov.au

12 August 2020

AgZero2030 submission to the State Soil Health Strategy

The lives, livelihoods, health and security of current and future generations rely on healthy soil, so we thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on a Soil Health Strategy for Western Australia.

About AgZero2030

AgZero2030 is an agriculture sector-led movement that supports climate solutions. It was established in September 2019 by approx. sixty influential leaders in the Western Australian agriculture sector at the 'Climate Solutions in WA Ag Forum'ⁱ that our volunteer committeeⁱⁱ ran with support from Farmers for Climate Action, DPIRD, and the Grain Industry Association of WA at the University Club of WA.

These leaders created our movement's goals to:

- 1) Support efforts in the WA ag sector to have net-zero greenhouse gas emissions (be carbon neutral) by 2030;
- 2) Share related positive stories from WA ag; and
- 3) contribute to good climate and ag policy.

People and organisations in the AgZero2030 movement, via distributed leadership, are working on these goals in their own spheres of influence.

Why we care

We are committed to the long-term well-being of our sector and communities. This well-being is underpinned by a healthy environment, including healthy soils.

AgZero2030's submissionⁱⁱⁱ to the WA Climate Change Policy Consultation outlined some of the adverse impacts of just 1.1°C global warming so far on Western Australian agriculture, natural resources and communities. We're adaptable people, but there are limits to business-as-usual adaptation.

Our ability to protect and enhance healthy soil has been, and will increasingly be, hampered by climate change.

AgZero2030's people and organisations have a range of motivations for playing our part in limiting global warming while adapting to climate change and telling the world about the WA ag sector's work towards this. Reasons include:

- managing economic risks (markets^{iv}, finance, insurability) and embracing economic opportunities;
- managing physical risks;
- managing legal risks^v;
- care for our own farms, families, industries and communities;
- care for future generations;
- embracing opportunities for rural WA in climate action;
- an interest in peace, nature and the global goals for sustainable development^{vi} more broadly;
- or several or all of the above, and more.

Our suggestions

We recognise and are grateful for the soil health expertise and work by many in WA, and for the WA government's existing support for healthy soils. We will leave it to others to provide detailed suggestions on how to build on existing efforts with activities like supporting targeted extension by trusted messengers within existing networks, and identifying and eliminating barriers to implementation of good, locally-relevant, evidence-based soil health practices.

AgZero2030 has had input into Farmers for Climate Action's submission to the state soil health strategy consultation and therefore we ask that you **refer to FCA's submission**.

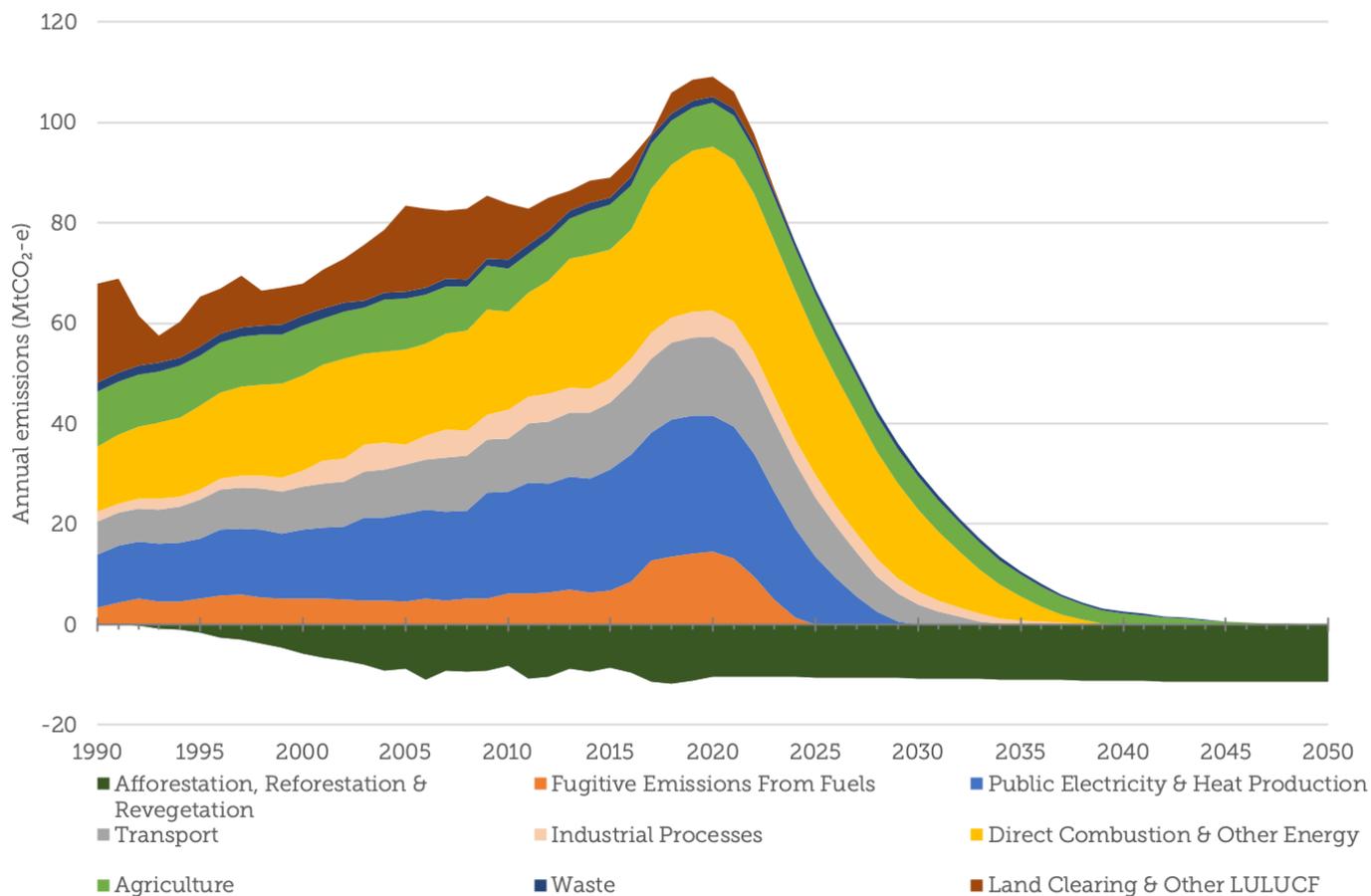
In our brief submission we'd like to make four points:

1. While increasing carbon in our landscapes is absolutely the right thing to do to increase the chance of enduring resilience, productivity and health – and we thank the WA government for their efforts to support work that achieves this – we note that in the discussion paper soil carbon is touted as a climate solution. As the planet warms, soils and vegetation in many regions aren't able to store as much carbon^{vii} as they did in the past, and in some cases are becoming net-*emitters* of carbon^{viii} instead of being carbon sinks. Your discussion paper acknowledges the limited capacity to increase soil organic carbon in areas with <500mm p/a rainfall. Therefore, we ask the **WA government to focus on enabling emissions reductions in WA, and not overly rely on soil or vegetation carbon sequestration as a climate solution**.

2. Because protecting and regenerating soil becomes harder with every fraction of a degree warming^{ix}, we ask that the **WA government play an active role in national and international efforts to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures, while pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.**

This means calculating WA’s share of the ever-shrinking remaining global emissions budget for a chance at 1.5°C, and creating and implementing a pathway^x and plans for emissions reductions in line with WA’s share.

Sectoral emissions pathway in line with Western Australia's share of the global emissions budget for a 67% chance of limiting warming to 1.8°C above pre-industrial temperatures*



* Australian emissions budget calculated using contraction & convergence (Garnaut). Western Australia's share of this calculated using relative status quo maintained. This results in Western Australia receiving 0.15% of the global budget.

A pathway to reduce emissions in WA and the agricultural sector needs to be effectively communicated to all stakeholders. In agriculture, this information will need to come from many sources including industry groups, grower groups, agronomists, farm consultants, State government and local governments.

AgZero2030 will help. AgZero2030’s net-zero emissions by 2030 work, amplifying the existing good work of others in the Australian ag sector, is our contribution.

3. To support Western Australian people and communities to make well-informed, future-friendly decisions, we ask that the **WA Government and its departments *proactively, repeatedly and clearly* communicate up-to-date global warming projections** with the associated projected climate change impacts at local levels, including heat and heatwaves, drought, fire and frost risk, changed seasons and rainfall, and extreme weather events; and the effects of these on human health, communities, natural resources, insurability and more.

If people and organisations understand what 1.5°C global warming by 2030 means, and understand that WA will benefit from using our ample resources to accelerate effective and beneficial climate action, it will increase our chances of working together for the healthiest possible future. (NB: 1.5 and 2 degrees will be disastrous^{xi}, but we risk hitting ~4°C warming in our children’s lifetimes if the world’s efforts continue to be insufficient^{xii}.)

WA people will need access to varied resources that clearly show the benefits of effective climate action to healthy soils.

4. We suggest that the **WA government consider framing investment in healthy soils as an *investment that can help solve multiple things at once***. For example, healthy soils contribute to national and international security and health through food security and nutrition; healthy soils contribute to biodiversity and national prosperity through food and fibre exports and nature-based tourism. Healthy soils are important to both domestic and international markets. Grassroots decision makers will need to have access to locally relevant resources, people and visual examples of ‘best management practices’ for healthy soils.

Thank you

Thanks again for the chance to be part of this strategy development. Please contact info@AgZero2030.org.au if we can provide more information or assist in any way.

Yours sincerely,
Simon Wallwork
Chair
AgZero2030

ⁱ <https://agzero2030.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AgZero2030-SUMMARY-of-the-Creating-Climate-Solutions-in-WA-Agribusiness-Forum-held-3-Sep-2019-1.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://agzero2030.org.au/committee>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://agzero2030.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AgZero2030-Submission-to-WA-Climate-Change-Policy-Consultation-2019-November.pdf>

^{iv} <https://tnfd.info/> Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures

^v <https://www.allens.com.au/insights-news/insights/2020/06/climate-change-director-governance/>

^{vi} <https://www.globalgoals.org/>

^{vii} <http://www.ipcc.ch/srccl>

^{viii} <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200304141623.htm>

^{ix} <http://www.ipcc.ch/srccl>

^x <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/191128-Submission.pdf>

^{xi} <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2865/a-degree-of-concern-why-global-temperatures-matter/>

^{xii} <https://climateactiontracker.org/>