



NSW farmers in **new income stream** trial

THE OWNERS of three properties in the Sweetwater Creek sub-catchment of Mullengandra in the South-West Slopes region of NSW are among 75 landholders across NSW helping to trial a potential new income stream for farmers.

Most farmers are accustomed to earning a living from primary production by growing livestock or grain and selling these commodities on the open market. But there is a potential new source of income for landholders that the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) is exploring through trialing the Environmental Services Scheme (ESS).

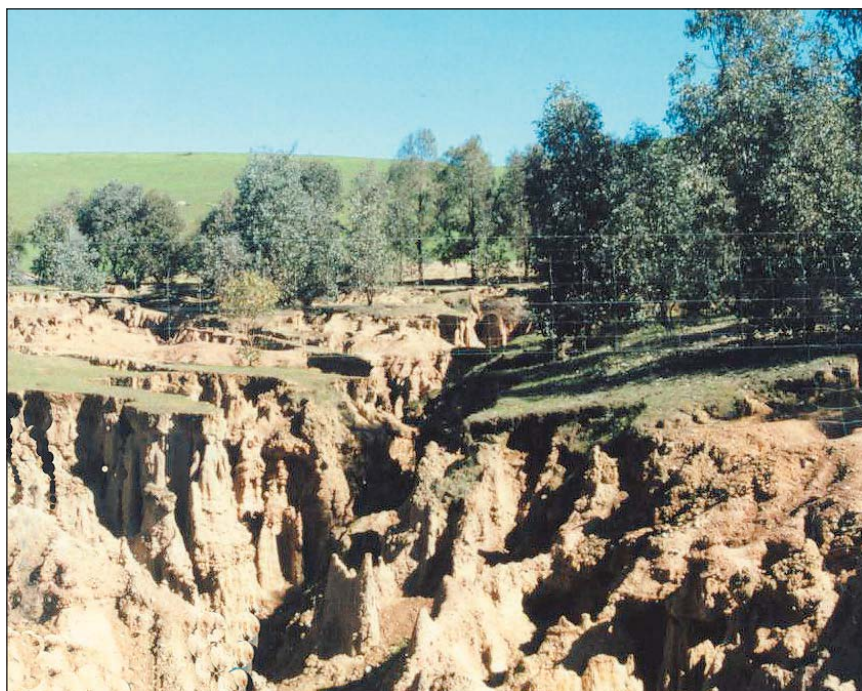
Food and fibre are not the only valuable outputs that can come from the land. Through choices landholders make in managing their property, it is possible to reduce mobilisation of salt through establishing perennial pastures, enhance biodiversity, reduce soil loss, improve water quality and reduce greenhouse gases.

These outcomes can translate into salinity, water quality, biodiversity and carbon credits – tradeable assets already acknowledged by international markets. Currently, however, if someone manages their property to provide these environmental services, they do not receive any additional income.

DIPNR is exploring markets that environmental services can provide, with the intention of developing new income opportunities for landholders. Across the three trial properties, \$190,000 of public money are being invested to deliver significantly accelerated farm-based land-use change over two years.

A total of 215 hectares of annual pastures will be sown to perennials, and 38ha of revegetation works and waterway protection will be completed. Stock have to be agisted elsewhere as essentially a 10-year program of works is being done in just two to three years.

DIPNR and DPI will monitor the



ABOVE: Gully erosion and sediment relocation is a major issue for water quality. Peter Artridge is fencing and revegetating all gullies and waterways on his property.

RIGHT: Landcare funding has seen the establishment of six shallow and one deep bore for monitoring the changes to watertable depth as a result of all the landuse change taking place.

properties to measure changes in the farm productivity and biodiversity, and this will continue for at least five years to identify and measure landscape level changes. These can then be given a market value for future income for the farm business.

Deep and shallow bores have been established by the Eastern Murray Dryland Salinity Project and are measured monthly. Quarterly water-quality testing through the Landcare group will show seasonal and annual variations in water quality as influenced by surrounding land use.

Within the next few years, landholders may well be trading in the international market of environmen-



tal services, along with the food and fibre markets.

Contact: Kim Krebs, Murray Catchment Management Authority, phone (02) 6043 0115, email <kim.krebs@cma.nsw.gov.au>.

Photographs by Kim Krebs