

2014 Regional Snapshot

How much of our agricultural land is protected from erosion?

Healthy soil provides us with food and fibre through our crops and livestock. Healthy soil provides nutrients for crops and pastures, stores and cycles water and carbon, and resists erosion.

In 2011, about two thirds of the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM region was used for agriculture, which produced about \$1.6 billion worth of products.

Some agricultural soils are susceptible to erosion by wind or water. Erosion causes a loss of topsoil and a decline in fertility of agricultural land. It also causes dust storms and increases sediment and nutrients in our waterways.

Sustainable land management practices, such as no-till cropping, reduce the risk of erosion because crops are sown with minimal disturbance. Stubble from previous crops slows the wind at the soil surface and dissipates rain, and the roots bind the soil.



Trend in protection from soil erosion



State target
Improve soil and land condition

Trend (2009-13) Getting better Ongoing efforts will be needed to continue to protect our soils

Protection from soil erosion is measured by the number of days each year that vegetation adequately covers the soil to prevent erosion.

Protection of soil from erosion has improved, from 232 days in 2003 to 325 days in 2013 (graph to right and map above).

Land managers are adopting more sustainable farming practices with support from government agencies, Natural Resource Management boards, agricultural industry groups and private agronomists. About 60 per cent of crops in the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM region are now sown using no-till cropping methods, but the rate of adoption is levelling off, as is the trend in erosion protection (graph to right).

These efforts lead to reduced sediment and nutrient loss into the atmosphere (e.g. dust storms) and waterways.



Where we are at (2013) Good Agricultural soils were protected from erosion for 325 out of 365 days

In the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM region soil was protected from erosion for 325 out of 365 days in 2013. Improvements since 2003 closely match the increasing adoption of no-till cropping methods.

Ongoing efforts will be needed to maintain or improve erosion protection by land managers through stubble retention, no-till cropping and best practice timing and duration of grazing.

Reliability of information ★★★★★ Excellent

Further information:
[Technical information for this report](#)
[Soil and land condition monitoring in South Australia](#)