



Minister told of biochar trials success

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The Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, was told that trials in the Northern Rivers using biochar are proving very positive, but biochar has to be imported to meet the demand.

Richmond Landcare Inc is conducting trials using biochar, a carbon-rich product created by burning waste materials, in soils used to grow sweet corn, avocados, coffee, sugarcane, macadamias and rice, as well as grazing pastures as part of the project.

“We are pleased to report to the Minister that our trials are showing positive results. For example, different biochar mixtures on the sweet corn crop showed significant growth rates for the crop, carbon retention and limited greenhouse gases,” said Tony Walker from Richmond Landcare.

“We would love to use more Australian biochar, but we have to import most of it from Indonesia and the Philippines. There is definitely an opportunity for a biochar plant to be established in the Northern Rivers.

“We are hoping that a local council in our area will build a plant – not only will this avoid burying or transporting green waste type garbage, but also make available locally produced biochar for trials and for farmers to utilise.”

The biochar trials have demonstrated its potential to sequester carbon, benefit soil health and increase plant growth.

The avocado trial centred around conventional fertilizer treatment versus biochar treatment for healthy and diseased trees.

“The results were very positive, in fact diseased trees treated with biochar out-performed the healthy trees treated with conventional fertilizer,” said Mr Walker.

Minister Burke yesterday had the opportunity to inspect sweet corn trials at Wollongbar Agricultural Institute and those in the Kahawa Estate Coffee plantation in nearby Booyong.

Mr Burke also met with farmers and scientists involved with the trials, and was able to discuss results with them.

A grant of \$297,000 from the Caring For Our Country Federal program has made the latest trials possible, which will continue for another year.

Note: Biochar is defined as the stable carbon-rich product that results from heating biomass materials (such as municipal green waste, poultry litter, forestry and agricultural residues) in limited oxygen. Biochar can be applied to soils to sequester carbon, to mitigate climate change and to increase soil fertility and agricultural productivity. The process also yields renewable energy.

<http://www.farnorthcoaster.com.au/news/7777/minister-told-of-biochar-trials-success/>