Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

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Short webinars for environmental policy-makers and practitioners

Soil Research Advances in Aotearoa 2020

The following questions were asked during our live webinar with Bryan Stevenson and Sam Carrick, but due to time restrictions, we were unable to answer these in the session.

Is it true that New Zealand soil is low in selenium? If so how to improve our soil in Auckland?

Yes, NZ soils are generally relatively low in selenium. The primary remedy at present (for animal production) is to add an appropriate mineral supplement to the feed. There is little evidence at present to suggest that natural methods (or Regenerative practices) are likely to increase uptake of scarce elements such as Selenium, but this is likely be investigated in the future.

Where is this taking us, in terms of Where is all this taking us with regenerative agriculture processes?

Some Regen Ag practices (cover cropping/mulching, no (or minimum) tillage, diversifying crops and pastures species) are reasonably well accepted. Other practices need better verification of their efficacy.

What are the minimum set of soil parameters that can infer about soil health?

That depends on the purpose you are monitoring. For Regional Council soil health monitoring uses a standard set of laboratory measurements that include pH, Olsen P, total C +N, minerliasable N, bulk density and macro porosity) that can be compared across regions and nationally for state of the environment reporting that relate to acidity, soil organic matter status, fertility and physical status of the soil. These tests require some cost though. The Visual Soil Assessment (VSA, https://soils.landcareresearch.co.nz/describing-soils/visual-soil-assessment-vsa-field-guide/), can be done by the individual landowner to get a general idea of soil health without any laboratory analyses.

Where can we get that book on Maori soil values?

https://shop.projectfreerange.com/item/pre-order-te-mahi-oneone-hua-parakore-a-mori-soil-sovereignty-and-wellbeing-handbook