



Small farms self-assessment tool



Local Land
Services



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Water and the Environment



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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (March 2022). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

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This self-assessment tool has been adapted from the Hunter Local Land Services Hunter Self-Assessment tool and the NRM North Small holding self assessment tool.

Design by: Kerry Hardy. w: baabaa.net

Acknowledgement of Country

Local Land Services (LLS) acknowledges we operate in and deliver services throughout Country of First Nations people. LLS recognises First Nations people hold a continuous and deep connection to Country and this in turn holds significance to the broader community.*

For First Nations people, Country takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape. It includes landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, the sky and sea as well as sacred places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, ceremony, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.

LLS recognises and respects Elders and cultural knowledge holders, both past and present, while acknowledging and respecting the unique and diverse enduring cultures and histories of all First Nations people.

LLS recognises that Caring for Country, the protection and promotion of First Nations cultures, heritage, land management practices and spiritual beliefs are paramount to the relationship with Country and that this benefits the whole community. By supporting self-determined futures and strengthening cultural values for First Nations people, LLS can contribute towards improved relationships and resilient sustainable communities.

(*Please note: the term First Nations people and communities, honours the unique physical and spiritual relationships to Country and acknowledges the diversity of cultural, social, economic and political structures held by the distinct First Nations of this continent.)

What is the self-assessment tool and how can it help?



How can it help?

This is a tool for managers of small land holdings who want to know more about best management practices and natural resource management.

The tool is a voluntary review of your property management and of any environmental impacts on and beyond the property boundaries.

The tool has been designed as a quick self-assessment and can be used on its own or as part of a property planning process.

The tool will help you to:

- Assess how you currently manage nine important themes on your property
- Identify key agricultural and environmental opportunities and constraints
- Review management options to address opportunities and constraints
- Determine priorities and next steps to help you effectively manage your property

The themes covered in this tool are:

- People and community relations
- Farm safety and emergencies
- Resilience and recovery
- Biosecurity
- Water
- Biodiversity
- Soils
- Livestock and grazing
- Air, energy and greenhouse gas management

Keep in mind

This is not a test, it is a tool for you and those you wish to share it with.

It's OK if you are not clear on any information you need and any actions you want to take at this stage. They can be developed during the property planning process and/or workshops.

How to use the self-assessment tool?

The self-assessment tool contains a series of questions divided into nine important property management themes.

You can work through the questions on your own or with anyone else who you manage the property with.

As you work through the themes and questions, you will identify where you already have good management practices in place and areas where you may like to take action.

You may wish to take notes as you go and summarise your results in the tables provided at the end of each section or use scores to summarise your results and create a baseline for revisiting over time.

The 'What's in the toolbox?' section of the Property Planning Workbook provides suggestions for actions and sources of further information.



Refer to 'What's in the toolbox?' in the property planning handbook for next steps



 People and community relations

Fill-in 

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|--|----------|---|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I am actively involved in coordinated programs/activities with neighbours and community groups (e.g. Landcare) to improve the management of my property and it's surrounds for improved environmental, emergency and biosecurity outcomes. | | | | | | |
| I advise my immediate neighbours of agricultural activities, including those carried out by contractors that may affect them, such as agricultural spraying, noise, bird deterrents, burning. | | | | | | |
| I have contacts for my Local Land Services (LLS), Local Government and Landcare staff and know how to contact them to find information and advice about land management. | | | | | | |
| I understand that how I manage my property has influence on the wider environment and community. | | | | | | |
| I understand the obligations, expectations and responsibilities relating to rural property ownership and what I can and cannot do legally on my property. | | | | | | |
| I understand my obligations in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage and protection of Aboriginal Objects and places in NSW. | | | | | | |
| My nutrient management practices minimise nuisance impacts on other people's enjoyment of the environment (e.g. contributing to algal blooms and contamination of waterways) | | | | | | |
| Based on my people and community relations assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take | | | | |
| I think I have all the information I need. | | | | | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | | | | | |



Farm safety and emergencies

Fill-in

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|--|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| Contact numbers for support agencies in the event of an emergency are readily accessible. | | | | | | |
| I have a complete First Aid kit on-hand and I know how to use it. | | | | | | |
| I have a clear, printed Bushfire Survival Plan and everyone in our household knows how to follow it. | | | | | | |
| I have a clear, printed Flood Plan and everyone in our household knows how to follow it. | | | | | | |
| I know where to get advice on how to reduce bushfire and/or flood risk on my property. | | | | | | |
| I have adequate water supplies for firefighting, that these are clearly marked and accessible if required by emergency services. | | | | | | |
| I understand my obligations in relation to providing safety for any visitors, staff, contractors and myself on my property. | | | | | | |
| I operate and maintain machinery and/or specialised equipment in a safe manner. | | | | | | |
| Fuel and chemicals are stored, handled and transported safely on the property. | | | | | | |

| Based on my farm safety and emergencies assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|--|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |



Resilience and recovery

Fill-in

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|---|----------|---|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I have a drought management plan for my property. | | | | | | |
| I have a plan in place for water use in drought, dry times and firefighting. | | | | | | |
| I destock and rest paddocks and protect soil health in adverse seasonal conditions. | | | | | | |
| I optimise water use efficiency on my property by minimising potential losses through, for example, evaporation and runoff. | | | | | | |
| I have good relations with my neighbours and am actively involved with community groups. | | | | | | |
| I make management decisions, including medium and long-term changes informed by climate predictions. | | | | | | |
| I am adapting my management strategies to deal with changing climate and markets. | | | | | | |
| I am aware of how biodiversity on my property creates resilience. | | | | | | |
| I am aware of how stress affects me, and I actively use coping strategies to deal with stress. | | | | | | |
| I am aware of different pasture species ability to recover after inundation and am aware of options for pastures after a flood. | | | | | | |
| Based on my resilience and recovery assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take | | | | |
| I think I have all the information I need. | | | | | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | | | | | |



Fill-in 

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|--|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I understand what plant, animal, pest and disease biosecurity is and why landholders need to play their part. | | | | | | |
| I have a biosecurity plan that identifies threats to my property. | | | | | | |
| I can identify the vertebrate pests and weeds on my property, and I am actively controlling them. | | | | | | |
| Pest animals and weeds are managed in accordance with legislative requirements. | | | | | | |
| In terms of animal management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am aware of my obligations to have a Property Identification Code (PIC) if I own any livestock, including horses. I am aware of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) for sheep, goats, pigs and cattle and documents required when I buy, sell or move animals. I participate in the National Vendor Declaration System as required. | | | | | | |
| I know who to contact in the case of plant, animal, and pest/weed/disease issues. | | | | | | |
| I actively reduce biosecurity risks by taking measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing the spread of weeds, pests and diseases by managing vehicles and machinery for biosecurity hygiene such as cleaning tyres. Ensuring that any stock feed purchased (e.g. grain or hay) is free from unwanted weeds and pests. | | | | | | |
| I manage farm and domestic wastes including animal carcasses, weeds and fruit safely and within local guidelines and relevant regulations. | | | | | | |
| I keep adequate records (e.g. stock sales, movement on and off farm, including beehives, animal health, husbandry and paddock history) to allow biosecurity issues to be managed if needed. | | | | | | |

| Based on my biosecurity assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|--|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |



Fill-in 

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|--|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| Waterways are protected from farming and general property use activities with well vegetated buffers. | | | | | | |
| I restrict stock access to waterways and provide good quality and adequate quantity of water for stock. | | | | | | |
| Property and household effluent runoff is managed to protect waterways and to maximise on property re-use (including grey water and septic where appropriate). | | | | | | |
| I know my property water requirements (i.e. expected volume to meet household, stock and irrigation needs) and sufficient water is available. | | | | | | |
| Stock and irrigation water quality is inspected regularly, and steps are taken to avoid negative effects of poor quality water on soils and livestock. | | | | | | |
| I prevent the risk of nutrient and chemical runoff and contamination of waterways by ensuring appropriate storage and application of fertiliser or chemicals. | | | | | | |
| I use water efficiently and have a plan in place for water use in drought, dry times and firefighting. | | | | | | |
| Water crossings are suitable for vehicles, machinery, stock and native animals. | | | | | | |
| I actively manage riparian areas on my property to keep them healthy. | | | | | | |
| I know where to get information on harvestable water rights and legal obligations when building dams, managing waterways and irrigating on my property. | | | | | | |
| I use decision support tools (e.g. soil moisture testing) to decide how much and when to irrigate and I measure the volume of water applied. | | | | | | |

| Based on my water assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|--|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |



Fill-in 

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|--|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I am aware of the biodiversity values on my property and I understand the value of retaining, improving and managing native vegetation on my property. | | | | | | |
| My property layout and land use adequately protect key areas of native vegetation and areas that may provide habitat for key plant and animal species. | | | | | | |
| I actively monitor the condition of any conservation areas on my property, e.g. monitoring invasive weeds. | | | | | | |
| I retain fallen timber/logs on the ground to provide habitat for wildlife. | | | | | | |
| I have considered the potential for enhancing wildlife and vegetation corridors on my property. | | | | | | |
| I actively link the biodiversity on my property to the wider region by trying to connect my conservation areas to other conservation areas nearby. | | | | | | |
| I manage grazing in conservation areas to retain 100% groundcover. | | | | | | |
| I have fenced creeks, dams and wetlands to protect them from stock. | | | | | | |
| I have the contact details for the local native animal rescue services in case of a wildlife emergency. | | | | | | |
| I understand my legal obligations regarding protecting native vegetation and threatened species and clearing native vegetation. | | | | | | |

| Based on my biodiversity assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|---|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |



Fill-in 

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|---|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I am aware of the different soil types on my property. | | | | | | |
| I understand the capabilities and limitations of the different soils on my property. | | | | | | |
| My farm and land management practices match the capability of the soil types (and landforms) on my property. | | | | | | |
| I actively manage areas prone to erosion on my property such as stock crossings, creek crossings, tracks and gullies. | | | | | | |
| I regularly monitor groundcover on my property and aim for 100% groundcover all year round. | | | | | | |
| I have identified and actively manage soil constraints on my property such as acidity, sodicity, compaction, surface crusting and water logging. | | | | | | |
| I aim to increase soil organic matter. | | | | | | |
| I minimise mechanical disturbance of the soil. | | | | | | |
| I monitor soil health to track whether my management is maintaining, improving or degrading the soil. | | | | | | |
| I apply fertilisers / organic soil amendments to meet crop / pasture needs and to balance nutrient losses at rates recommended by Fertcare® accredited suppliers or a qualified agronomist. | | | | | | |

| Based on my soils assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|--|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |



Livestock and grazing

Fill-in

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|---|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I maintain the health of my livestock by regular monitoring and providing adequate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantity and quality of feed • shade and shelter • access to clean and reliable water sources | | | | | | |
| I undertake feed budgeting and have a grazing and feed plan to provide adequate nutrition to my animals at all times. | | | | | | |
| Boundary fences and gates are regularly checked and maintained to prevent straying animals, including pets. | | | | | | |
| My grazing plan allows adequate rest time for pastures to re-grow before re-grazing. | | | | | | |
| I am prepared for fire and floods and have a plan of how to protect the welfare of my animals during such events. | | | | | | |
| I prevent animal diseases by actively monitoring my animals and applying animal health treatments such as drenching and vaccination in a proactive manner. | | | | | | |
| I report cases of unusual sickness or death of animals to a vet or government officer. | | | | | | |
| If I do not live on the property, or I plan to be on holiday, I arrange for another person to be responsible for the welfare of my animals. | | | | | | |
| I manage manure levels in pastures and yards to protect against nutrient excesses, contamination of water and to maximise on farm re-use. | | | | | | |

| Based on my livestock and grazing assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|--|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |



Air, energy and greenhouse gas emissions

Fill-in

| | Yes | Working toward | Not really | No | NA | Action/notes |
|--|-----|----------------|------------|----|----|--------------|
| I have identified activities that potentially generate harmful or offensive odour, dust, smoke and/or noise and my practices minimise these emissions. | | | | | | |
| I avoid burning plant waste materials and crop residues and retain or compost them where practical. | | | | | | |
| I am aware of the major greenhouse gases emitted from my property and try to minimise or avoid them (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide). | | | | | | |
| I am aware of and implement management strategies that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from livestock and livestock waste. | | | | | | |
| I consider energy efficiency when selecting new equipment, machinery and vehicles. | | | | | | |
| I regularly maintain machinery and equipment to maximise energy efficiency. | | | | | | |
| I am aware of the contribution of fossil fuels to greenhouse gas emissions and monitor fuel and oil consumption on my property. | | | | | | |
| Where possible, I use non-fossil fuels and energy sources. | | | | | | |
| I have investigated options for renewable energy sources on my property. | | | | | | |

| Based on my air, energy and greenhouse gas emissions assessment: | Yes / No | Information I need / Actions I want to take |
|---|----------|---|
| I think I have all the information I need. | | |
| I think I am doing the best I can. | | |

