

# What's Sustainability in farming?

What does the term 'sustainability' mean to you?

Do you think it has a simple, agreed meaning? Where would you go to check out how your meaning compares to a standard one? A dictionary?

What about 'sustainable farming'?

These terms came into being about two decades ago out of a United Nations global aim, but a google search will show that there are a lot of published definitions now! Below are some websites with definitions of 'sustainable agriculture' that are worth a look. Look for what their definitions have in common and how they can vary!

1 Landcare –

<http://www.une.edu.au/aglaw/Landcare%2011%20Position%20Paper.pdf>

page 4

2 Rural and Environmental Planning Consultants -

<http://www.ruralplanning.com.au/library/newsletter/march99.shtml>

3 an on-line dictionary –

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/sustainable+agriculture>

4 an English University subject

[http://www.ecifm.rdg.ac.uk/sustainable\\_agriculture.htm](http://www.ecifm.rdg.ac.uk/sustainable_agriculture.htm)

5 a children's on-line encyclopedia

[http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/li/List\\_of\\_sustainable\\_agriculture\\_topics](http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/li/List_of_sustainable_agriculture_topics)

6 an organic farmer

<http://www.wellfedhomestead.com/teaching-kids-about-sustainable-agriculture>

Given this variation, perhaps it's more important to know how local farmers interpret this term and how they apply it. How can you find this out? You will need to interview a farmer!

When you conduct an interview, you should do some research on the topic and plan your questions beforehand. Below is a guideline to an interview that could be conducted with a farmer about sustainability in agriculture.

# Try this out –

**Interview a farmer to find out about sustainability on his farmland.**

*First, find your farmer and set up a time for the interview!*

*You will read the questions and, as you listen to the answers, make notes or tape the interview so that you can report it later.*

## **Interview script**

***Greeting and state your name!***

Thankyou for agreeing to this interview.

Your name is .....

and you farm in the district of .....

In this Australian Year of the Farmer, I am finding out about sustainability on farmlands. I would like to discuss this with you.

I have two key questions:

**1 What do these terms mean to you?**

- ‘sustainability’ .....
- ‘sustainable farming’ .....

**2 Sustainable farming may be done in many ways. What is done on this farm to sustainably**

• **Grow crops**

.....  
.....

• **Grow stock**

.....  
.....

• **Look after native plants and animals**

.....  
.....

• **Deal with any farmland problems (name them, eg soil erosion, salting, pests, drought)**

.....  
.....

**Thank you for taking part in this interview.**

