Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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A day to get your hands dirty

Researchers at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) are getting their hands dirty and taking a closer look at soil to help Tasmanian farmers increase their productivity and sustainability.

Today is World Soil Day, an international day to recognise and celebrate the importance of soils in our natural systems.

Earlier this year, TIA established a soil physics laboratory in Hobart with state-of-the-art technology to analyse soil from research sites across the State – enabling researchers to analyse samples in detail within a week compared to three months with previous technology.

TIA’s Irrigation Program Leader Ms Sue Hinton said the soil laboratory was the first of its kind at TIA and was contributing towards the success of the Water for Profit program that is helping farmers maximise their investment in water.

“Information from TIA’s soil research will be used by farmers in the Water for Profit program to make informed decisions to improve the health and productivity of their soils, crops and irrigation,” Ms Hinton said.

“Managing irrigation is not just about applying water to crops and pastures, it is about using the available water effectively. It is so valuable for farmers to know the different soil types in their paddocks and the specific characteristics of these soils.

“Having an understanding of the water-holding capacity of soil helps in planning irrigation and can also improve efficiency, regardless of the type of irrigation equipment being used to deliver the water.”

TIA soil scientist Dr Marcus Hardie said the new equipment allowed researchers to measure soil water retention curves, field capacity, soil structure and determine parameters for soil water modelling.

TIA is a joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania. Water for Profit is a collaborative program between the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, TIA and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association.

Information released by:

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
Phone: 03 6430 1655 or 0438 387 436
Email:  tia.comms@utas.edu.au

utas.edu.au/tia