



Close-up of seeding Windmill Grass *Chloris truncata*. A hardy, drought tolerant grass which can produce over 3t/ha dry matter and contains up to 12% crude protein.

What is native pasture?

Native pasture is grazing pasture that is dominated by Australian native perennial grasses. Native grasses occur extensively across the rangelands of Australia and are well adapted to a variety of soils and climates.

In Victoria, early settlers recognised the value of native grasses and established pastoral runs on the grasslands and grassy woodlands of the Wimmera, Mallee and northern plains. Early settlers did not know that native pasture can not tolerate continuous grazing and it wasn't long before large areas were grazed bare^{1,2}.

Native pastures are deep rooted, maintain 100% ground cover all year round, increase organic carbon levels and play an important role in reducing wind and water erosion of soils. They can improve the water balance of the soil which also has benefits for managing dryland salinity.

Some facts about native grass pasture:

- Some native grass species are winter active C3 growers, others are summer active C4 growers.
- Native pasture provides increased ground cover and requires less fertiliser. As perennials they can use water more efficiently, accessing rainfall throughout the whole year, not just during winter.
- Native pastures are drought resistant, frost tolerant, vigorous growers and most are highly palatable to livestock.

- Because they are self seeding, native pastures do not need to be re-sown.
- More beef cattle and sheep graze on native grasses than on any other pasture grasses in Australia.
- Native grasslands are one of the most threatened ecosystems in south-eastern Australia. Native pastures can have high biodiversity values. Many invertebrates, birds and reptiles inhabit native pastures. These species play an important role in controlling insect pests in neighbouring crops and pasture.
- Native pastures can be used in conjunction with cropping as part of a mixed farming system known as Pasture Cropping.

**For more information contact
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¹ Crouch, C. 2005. *Tangible benefits of Native Vegetation. Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.*

² Langford C. et al, 2004. *Managing Native Pastures for Agriculture and Conservation. NSW DPI.*



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