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IS YOUR SOIL HEALTHY?

Soil is the foundation of every farming activity. Whatever your operation, it all begins with the soil! Therefore, if you want to get the best from your farm, you need to get the best from your soil. This will only happen if your soil is healthy!

Let's draw an analogy: when you're not feeling well, you might wait a few days, hoping the problem will come right but then, if you still feel sick, the sensible thing to do is contact a doctor. Why? Because health professionals are trained to diagnose health problems and get you healthy again.

It's the same with your soil. Your farm may not be performing as well as you'd like. What are you going to do? There are several options:

- 1) You could do nothing and hope for the best
- 2) You take a "stab in the dark" and try "this" or "that" remedy
- 3) You could get a "soil doctor" to diagnose and fix the problem

If you choose the third option, your "soil doctor" will carry out appropriate tests and gather other diagnostic information, all with a view to optimising soil health and improving farm productivity. This usually results when the soil chemical, physical and biological spheres are optimised and interacting properly.

The **chemical sphere** relates to properties such as pH, Olsen P, sulphate, cations etc. These are familiar to most farmers because basic soil tests are derived from the chemical sphere. These properties give information about the supply of nutrients and, depending on the test, they can also tell something about the cycling and storage of nutrients as well.

However, the soil is much more than a collection of chemical parameters, just as a person is more than a few simple medical tests (blood, pulse, temperature etc). The latter aid a doctor to find out some general health information about you but if results from such tests are all satisfactory, your doctor will want to probe a little more deeply and undertake further tests if you do not feel healthy.

In the same way, you usually need to look beyond the chemical sphere to optimise soil health and gather information about the soil **physical and biological spheres** as well. Without the latter, results can be misleading.

Soiltech are specialists in soil health and nutrition. We take a holistic approach to the soil because, the better the information gathered, the better the diagnosis and the greater the prospects of optimising soil health and thus farm productivity as well.