**Soil health a solid investment   
for our farmers**

**HEALTHY SOILS SYMPOSIUM | Wednesday 7th December..   
   
Wests Leagues Club, Walkerston**

Free for landholders – RSVP by Friday 2nd December

Mango producers Ken and Mary Ede (of Longmile Mangoes) spent years observing the rural sector for ideas on how to improve soil health.

“We looked at all these different kinds of farming systems, but I didn’t want to jump in until we found something that could be commercially viable,” said the locally based Seaforth farmer.

Looking at what goes on underground was a game-changer for them.

“We’ve reduced our fertiliser use by 85 % and that’s with a slight rise in productivity most years,” said Ken.

“Our mangoes had one of the highest Brix (sugar) levels at the Melbourne markets last year, which is an excellent result in terms of flavour and the quality of fruit from our region.”

Like many farmers Ken wasn’t convinced until he saw soil health in action.

“We went on a farm tour and saw it all in operation - biofertilisers, microbes and pasture health. I thought, this is working alright,” he said.

“So we started implementing it here about two years ago. We make biofertilisers on-farm and really focus on our inputs and using soil health as a foundation for a more productive operation.”

Ken says while the results speak for themselves, it was also important they were measured.

“We work with Reef Catchments, who monitor, measure and research the changes in the soil – things like microbe levels and activity, soil carbon and water holding capacity.”   
  
Ken said soil health was not just a ‘feel good’ concept.

“We’re actually doing it here and it’s actually working.   
  
“We take a holistic approach, and we also run cattle. So after we had such good results on our fruit trees, we started applying the same concept to our grazing pastures. We’ve been using the treatment now for several months and we’re starting to see changes. Our dung beetle population has gone crazy and that’s without any help on our part.

“Soil health is about small improvements that add up to something much bigger.”

- Ken Ede, Seaforth Mango Producer

Ken will be a key speaker at this year’s annual **Healthy Soil Symposium,** hosted by Reef Catchments.

Jacob Betros, Reef Catchments Regional Landcare Facilitator, said the event was designed to help growers and industry share ideas and outcomes.

“There is a real groundswell of interest in soil health. This is one of our most popular events, because it gives growers a chance to talk to each other and to hear from soil experts on how they can benefit by making soil health a priority,” he said.

“Currently farmers are facing a lot of challenges including declining yields, poor soil health, and the desire to reduce nitrogen inputs. Margins are getting tighter. It’s not about throwing out chemical fertilisers altogether, but it’s about getting a balance that leads to both economic and sustainability benefits.

“Participants at the 2016 Healthy Soil Symposium will hear from what growers are trialling locally, as well as from the experts, including the very popular Kym Kruse from RegenAg. We encourage anyone with an interest to come along.”

This event is free for landholders and the community, through funding from the Australian Government (National Landcare Programme).

The day will be followed by a soil workshop featuring Kym Kruse from RegenAg for those looking for more in-depth information.

*This event is followed by a:***SOIL WORKSHOP**

**Where:** Wests Leagues Club, Walkerston

**Date**: Thursday, 8th December

**Time:** 9am – 1pm

**Cost:** FREE – Smoko and Lunch Provided

**RSVP:** By Friday 2nd December – [jacob.betros@reefcatchments.com](mailto:jacob.betros@reefcatchments.com)  
**Featured presenter:** Kym Kruse, RegenAg

**HEALTHY SOIL SYMPOSIUM 2016**

**Where:** Wests Leagues Club, Walkerston

**Date:** Wednesday, 7th December

**Time:** 9am – 3.30pm

**Cost:** FREE – Smoko and Lunch Provided

**RSVP:** By Friday 2nd December – [jacob.betros@reefcatchments.com](mailto:jacob.betros@reefcatchments.com)

*Events are proudly supported by Reef Catchments, through funding from the Australian Government National Landcare Programme.*

**CLICK ON THE HYPERLINKS BELOW TO DOWNLOAD HIGH RES IMAGES FOR THIS RELEASE.**

[**IMG1**](http://reefcatchments.com.au/files/2016/10/EDE4.jpg)– Ken and Mary Ede, mango producers from Longmile Mangoes, Seaforth.   
[**IMG2**](http://reefcatchments.com.au/files/2016/10/Longmile-Mango-Ken-Ede4.jpg) **and** [**IMG3**](http://reefcatchments.com.au/files/2016/10/Longmile-Mango-Ken-Ede3.jpg)– The Ede’s make their own biofertiliser on farm to use on crops and paddocks.   
[**IMG4**](http://reefcatchments.com.au/files/2016/10/EDE5.jpg)– Mango products.