

# Sweet Corn



Mietta Smith  
Narrabri Public School



## Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

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Author: Mietta Smith

Teacher: Mr. Heffernan

School: Narrabri Public School

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Hi! My name is farmer Rob. I live on a farm called Spring Field on the outskirts of Maple Tree in north west New South Wales.

Our farm is 2000 hectares and we have a beautiful river running through the property.

In my family I have my wife, whose name is Brigette and two children called Hamish and Emily. We also have two dogs, Bonnie and Vanilla. They are Fox Terriers.

We moved here only recently because my parents were sadly too old to keep running the property.

We all love living on our farm!



On our farm we grow corn. Our first harvest was amazing! We harvested 14 tonnes of corn per hectare. We thought we were great farmers and it was easy. But our second harvest wasn't quite as good, with only 11 tonnes of corn per hectare.

By the third year we barely had any corn and it wasn't as good quality as the other years. We only harvested 7 tonnes per hectare and a lot of it was sold as stock feed. We were really worried!

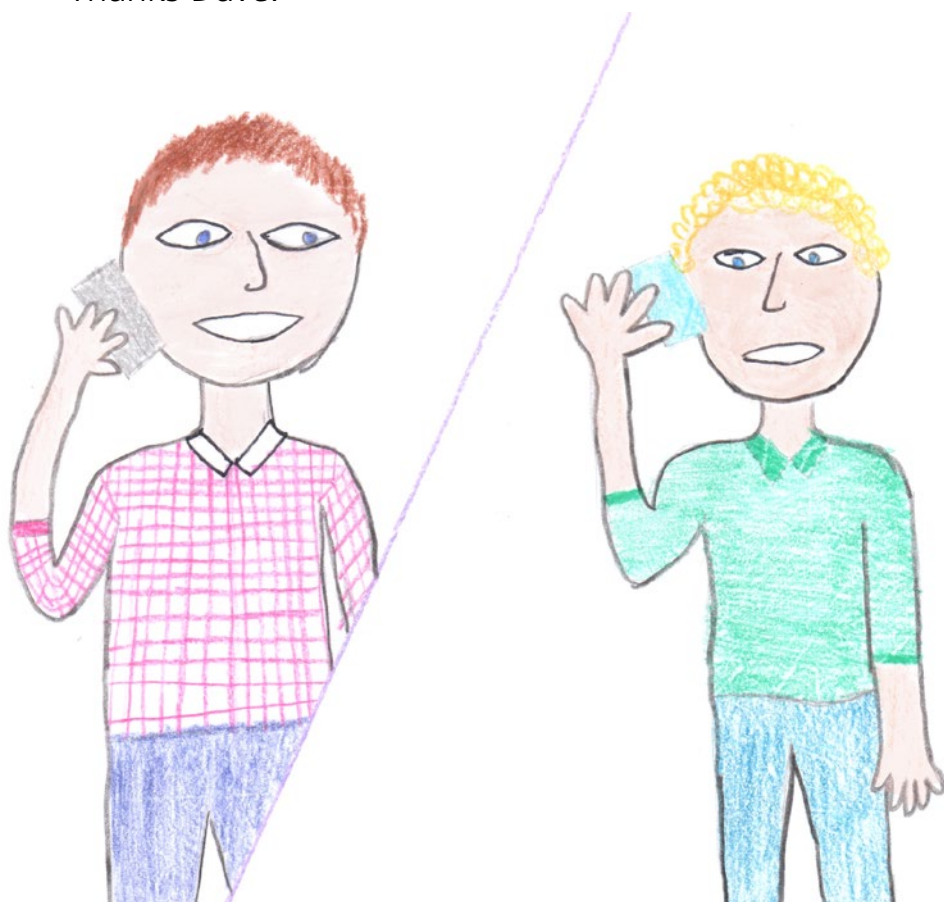


“Quick we need an Agronomist!” Brigette suggested that I should call Dave, our next door neighbour. “He will know who to call.” We also checked the Internet.

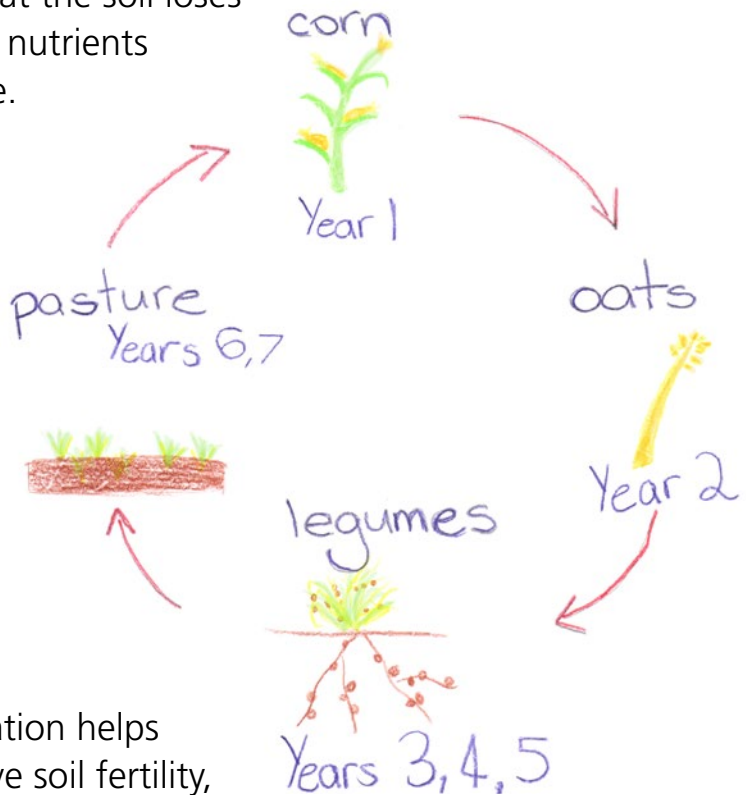
“Hi Dave, it’s Rob. I’m having some trouble with my soil. Can you recommend an Agronomist?”

“I sure can,” said Dave. “I know a great Agronomist called Annabelle. She’s the best in the district. I’ll text you her number.”

“Thanks Dave.”



Annabelle explained that we need to do crop rotation to get the best harvest. She explained that by planting the same crop in the same paddocks year after year means that the soil loses the same nutrients each time.

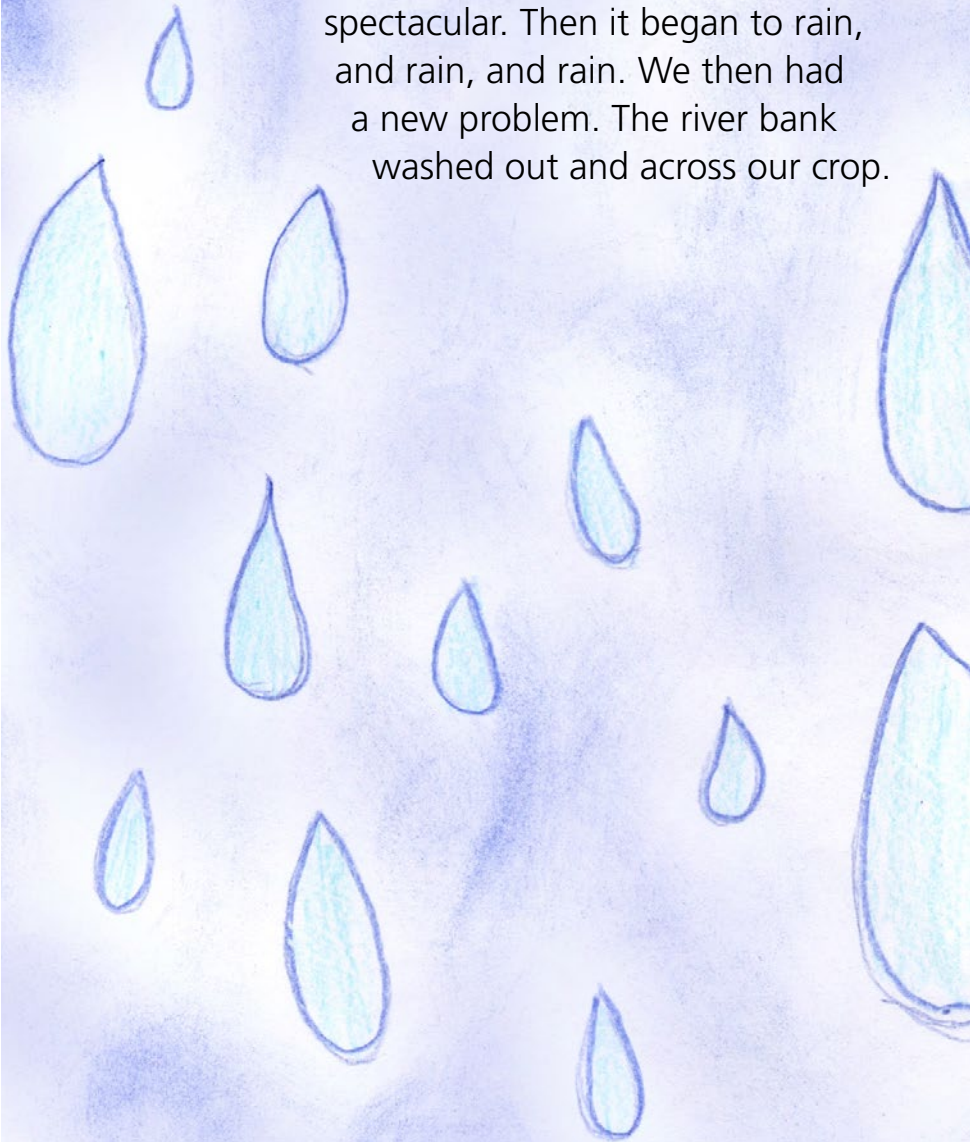



Crop rotation helps to improve soil fertility, control disease, pests and weeds, as well as control soil erosion and reduce salt.

Rotating crops means that the plants recycle nutrients in the soil. She suggested that we grow a combination of deep and shallow rooted crops.



We decided to plant oats. They shot up so quickly and they looked spectacular. Then it began to rain, and rain, and rain. We then had a new problem. The river bank washed out and across our crop.





When the rain stopped I went out and inspected the property to see all the damage. All the soil in the creek had washed away and there was a big gully in the middle of my crops.



So I rang Dave to see what advice he might have.

“Hi Dave, it’s Rob here. That storm made an absolute mess of the place, with the soil ripped out of the gully and washed away from the main paddock. Do you know anyone who could help?”

“Sure, give Louise down at the Soil Conservation Service a ring. She knows how to protect your soil and make sure that it doesn’t happen again. I will send you her number.”

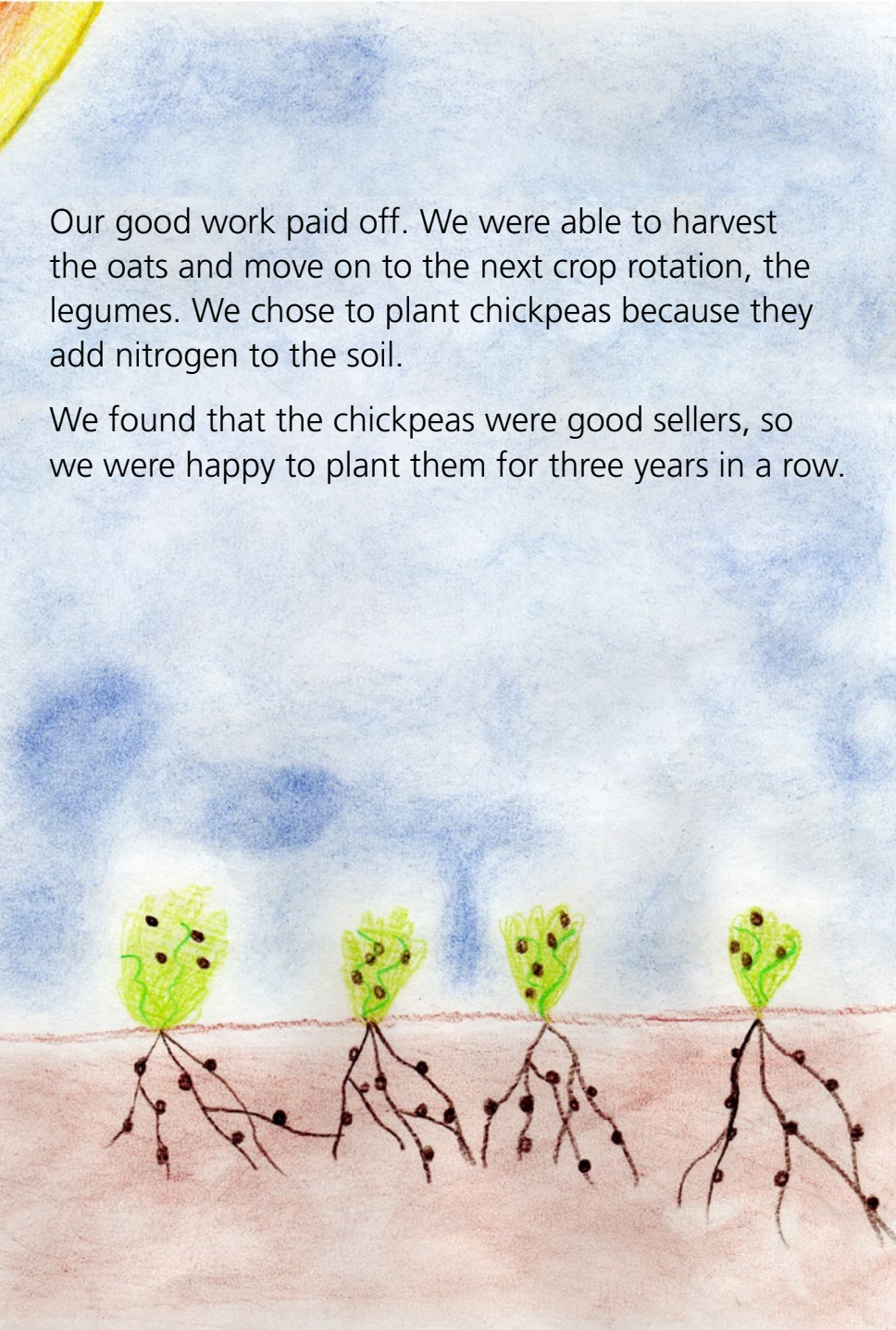
“Thanks Dave, you’re a life saver.”

Louise came and inspected the property and recommended that I put some erosion control banks in the gully and the paddock to stop any future rain washing the valuable soil away.



As the sun shone and my crops  
grew tall and strong, I got to work  
with my dozer repairing all the  
damage to the soil. Now I knew  
that in the future my soils would  
be protected.





Our good work paid off. We were able to harvest the oats and move on to the next crop rotation, the legumes. We chose to plant chickpeas because they add nitrogen to the soil.

We found that the chickpeas were good sellers, so we were happy to plant them for three years in a row.

Farmer Rob decided to lease out the land to farmer Dave. So when it was time to leave the paddock with no crops, we had cows grazing on the grass that grew wild. We also had some money coming in for those two years.





After 9 years of living on our farm we were back to the start of the cycle and we planted corn again.

We had all learnt a lot about managing soil and how important it is to have a productive farm. You should have seen how happy the worms were! I imagined they were doing a 'happy dance' in all that lovely soil.







As the months went by my crops grew and grew and looked very healthy with lots of corn to harvest.

This corn was out best harvest ever, thanks to looking after our soils. We harvested 15 tonnes per hectare and everyone was talking about our success.



Our kids were also getting interested in helping on the farm which was really exciting. Brigette and I were proud to think that our city kids were turning into clever and hard working farmers.





Mietta Smith  
Narrabri Public School, Year 5 2017



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