

Labor spruiks carbon opportunities

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Minister for Regional Development Simon Crean yesterday rolled into Mount Gambier to spruik the benefits of the Federal Government's carbon plan and gain an insight into how local farmers were building carbon back into their soils.

During a whistlestop tour, the Labor Party heavyweight visited Clover Estate at Mil Lel that showcased how carbon could be sequestered into the soil.

His visit follows the Gillard Government announcing it would open up new opportunities for Australian farmers and landholders to participate in lucrative international markets for carbon credits in a new carbon farming initiative.

Under the scheme, the Federal Government will help facilitate the sale of carbon on domestic and international markets.

Mr Crean told The Border Watch yesterday that the Mount Gambier farming community had a huge opportunity to tap into the fledgling carbon farming sector.

The prominent Labor Cabinet member said farmers were on the verge of a "new era of opportunity" that was being fostered by carbon pricing.

He said Mount Gambier was an example of one of the 12 communities he had visited over the past three weeks that had realised there were "huge opportunities" with the pricing of carbon.

Mr Crean — who flew into Mount Gambier from Whyalla — urged farmers to see the opportunities developing and not to view carbon pricing as a "threat".

He argued farmers not only had the opportunity to increase productivity but to attract carbon credits.

"It is a double win for them," the former agricultural minister said.

Questioned whether carbon could be measured in the soil, Mr Crean said that was an area that needed further investigation, but argued he believed it could be achieved.

Mr Crean said there were "significant incentives" for farmers in the government's carbon package.

He claimed placing a price on carbon would not only secure Australia's food base, but would lift productivity.

Mr Crean said these outcomes would be "driven by putting a price on carbon".

But he said it was up to the farming sector to be innovative and capture opportunities and claimed Australia could excel in the sector.

"Creating a market for carbon pricing is the most efficient way to send an economic signal as well as lowering the carbon footprint," Mr Crean said.

Meanwhile, LawrieCo Biological Farming spokesperson Adrian Lawrie — who presented an information session to Mr Crean and a group of farmers yesterday — described Mr Crean's visit to Mount Gambier as "terrific".

He said it was a great opportunity to show Mr Crean how carbon could be successfully sequestered into soils in the Mount Gambier region by using biological methods instead of conventional chemical-based solutions.

Mr Lawrie said there was evidence to show that this improved the health of the soil, boosted production and lifted the health of animals.