

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE 2023

Statement

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [6.29 pm]: I feel incredibly privileged to have this role in this place; it gives me a chance to meet some amazing people and to go to some very inspiring events. One of those events was the Regenerative Agriculture Conference in Margaret River a few weeks ago. It was really inspiring and it gave me hope for the future.

The first speaker was a gentleman named Dr Terry McCosker, who gave a great opening speech. He spoke about soil health and connection to country, but when he finished his speech, he had a plant on the stage with him that he had connected to a little microphone, and using his iPhone, we were all able to listen to the song of this plant. That was quite a brave thing to do, because it is quite out there to talk about plants communicating and things like that. This plant was very aware of her role there and the energy coming off this plant was very exuberant. He played the song in front of about 300 people.

I have known about plant communication for quite a long time. A lovely woman named Monica Gagliano wrote a book called *Thus Spoke the Plant: A Remarkable Journey of Groundbreaking Scientific Discoveries and Personal Encounters with Plants*. She started out as a marine biologist; on the Great Barrier Reef, she had a really interesting experience that made her decide to use her science for other things, so she went off to the Amazon and connected with the forest under the guidance of a shaman and basically learnt to speak the plant language. When she came back, she designed an experiment to show that plants communicate without being connected through air, water or soil. She showed that if she provided a stimulus to one plant, she could register it in another plant that was in a different room, in its own little container. She wrote *Thus Spoke the Plant* about that experience, which is a very interesting read.

Getting back to the conference, after having this plant sing for us, it was really about creating an understanding in people that we are connected to the land. We are not simple, individual little units, running around on this planet; we are connected to nature, and we need to tune into that. This is something that First Nations people talk about quite regularly. A lovely woman named Heidi Mippy spoke at the conference and explained that when we are on country and the land is healthy, when we are connected to that land, we can feel it in our bodies. We can feel the strength of the land vibrating through us.

It was interesting to hear from a lot of the farmers who spoke at the same conference about regenerative agriculture that they mix science with intuition. They listen to the land with their gut and then use that process to inform their farming practices. As a species, we are currently very much disconnected from each other and disconnected from the planet, and we need to focus on fostering that connection further.

I learnt some other things about regenerative agriculture. Farms can basically be drought-proofed through regenerative agriculture practices. One such practice is creating greater diversity of plant species and grasses. That results in an increase in root depth from about 15 centimetres up to as much as 45 or 60 centimetres. When there is a big rain, a deluge, the soil will then absorb much more water. The water will go deeper into the soil so that it can be used if there is a drought. With more native grasses, wildlife and weeds on a particular patch of land, the animals that eat there will have greater access to nutrients and will end up healthier. A diversity of grasses allows for greater micronutrients in our cattle. This leads to less stress, reduced health issues and overall happier animals requiring less medication—to such a degree that some farmers no longer need to mule their sheep or use anti-parasitic medications or drenching. It is also noted that bulls have a much higher sperm count; apparently, that is quite a valuable thing for farmers to be aware of!

There was also clear photographic evidence that land on one side of a fence was less green than on the other, and that the healthier land influenced cloud formation and rainfall; it had an effect on the microclimate around that area as well. Regenerative agriculture creates healthier soil that is more weatherproof, healthier animals, less nutrient loss due to erosion, less need of fertilisers and herbicides, stronger microbiome and good mycelium. Regenerative agriculture can, and absolutely should, play a role in creating a healthier planet and a healthier population.