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ENHANCING THE MANA AND MAURI OF SOIL FROM A MĀTAURANGA MĀORI PERSPECTIVE

Erina Wehi – Barton, C Bradley

AgriSea New Zealand, 7446 State Highway 2, RD 4, Karangahake 3674

Email: Erina@agrisea.co.nz

Title: Enhancing the Mana and Mauri of Soil: A Mātauranga Māori Perspective

Background

The findings in this report come from the Rere ki uta, Rere ki tai project which Agrisea New Zealand currently upholds, The applied application of Mātauranga Māori (Māori Knowledge) on ten farms (5 Tangata Whenua, 5 Tangata Tiriti) in the Waikato/Bay of Plenty region. The focus of the integration was to build a deeper understanding and connection of Te Mana me te Mauri o te Oenone (The mana and mauri of soil).

The application of Mātauranga Māori in the project included.

Tirotiro Taiao (Observations) - Incorporating traditional Māori practices and techniques, which are attuned to the local environment and seasons.

Māramataka Māori (Māori Lunar Calendar) Respecting and integrating Māori knowledge perspectives into decision-making processes related to land use and resource management.

Whakawhānaungatanga (Relationships) - Strengthening the connection between people and the land through Wānanga (Place of learning) learning Pūrākau (cultural narratives)

Ora Tangata, Ora Whenua (Wellbeing) – Understanding Holistic Māori wellbeing concepts, When the soil is fertile the wellbeing of man is good.

Introduction:

“Whatu ngarongaro te Tangata, Toitū te whenua - People will perish the land still remains”¹ To honour the mana and mauri of soil by fostering deep connections between kai pamu (farmers) and te Taiao (the natural environment), particularly through the lens of Mātauranga Māori (traditional Māori knowledge). By integrating diverse perspectives from Mātauranga Māori and farmer experience, the project seeks to catalyse transformative change to enhance the Mana and Mauri of soil.

Insights:

Ko te Taiao te Tuatahi – Our Environment Must Come First:

Embracing the fundamental principle of Kaitiakitanga (environmental stewardship) recognizing the interconnectedness of all living beings and the inherent value of te Taiao.

Prioritizing the well-being of the land as the foundation for sustainable and regenerative agriculture practices. Mana and Mauri of soil: Building Connection and Relationships with Soil: through Mātauranga Māori.

Fostering meaningful relationships with the soil through observation, reflection, and reciprocity, acknowledging our reciprocal roles as kaitiaki (guardians) of the land.

Knowledge and Understanding:

Understanding the concepts of mana and mauri in the context of soil and farming is crucial for fostering a holistic approach to land stewardship.

¹ <https://www.tupu.nz/en/tuhono/about-maori-land-in-new-zealand/why-whenua-matters>

Mana:

Mana refers to a spiritual essence or power that resides within all living things, including soil. In the context of farming, mana can be understood as the inherent vitality and life force present within the soil, which sustains the ecosystem and supports agricultural productivity.

Building mana in the soil involves nurturing its health and fertility through sustainable land management practices, such as organic farming methods, crop rotation, and soil conservation measures.

Farmers can honour the mana of soil by cultivating a deep respect for the land, acknowledging its intrinsic value and interconnectedness with all living beings.

Mauri:

Mauri is the life force or vitality that imbues all aspects of the natural world, including soil. It represents the essence of life and the interconnectedness of all living things.

In the context of farming, mauri encompasses the health and well-being of the soil ecosystem, including its microbial diversity, nutrient cycling processes, and overall resilience to environmental stressors.

Enhancing the mauri of soil involves promoting biodiversity, improving soil structure, and minimizing the use of chemical inputs that may harm soil health.

Farmers can work to restore and protect the mauri of soil by adopting regenerative agricultural practices that prioritize ecological balance and long-term sustainability.

Building Our Capacity Together:

Embracing diverse knowledge systems, including Mātauranga Māori, global creation stories, scientific insights, and farmer experience, as complementary lenses through which to understand and steward the land.

Creating spaces for collaborative learning such as Wānanga (workshops) and knowledge exchange, empowering farmers to become agents of change in their own communities.

Implementing Mātauranga Māori monitoring and evaluation mechanisms such as Māramataka Māori (Māori Lunar Calendar) to track the ecological, social, and economic impacts of land management changes, fostering accountability and continuous improvement.

Mahia te Mahi – People and Community Led Change:

Harnessing the collective wisdom and leadership of farmers and communities to drive purpose-led change in land management practices.

Facilitating transformative experiences, such as wānanga (learning workshops) and on-farm days, that integrate Mātauranga Māori into practical action and empower participants to become stewards of the land.

Mana and Mauri of Soil Framework:

Introducing a holistic framework that invites farmers to deepen their connection to the land, guided by principles of observation, reciprocity, and respect.

Empowering farmers to become active participants in the regeneration of soil health and vitality, fostering resilience and abundance for future generations.

Conclusion:

Through the lens of Mātauranga Māori, this manuscript illuminates a pathway towards holistic land stewardship that honours the mana and mauri of soil. By embracing Mātauranga Māori, fostering meaningful relationships with the land, and nurturing collective action, we can embark on a journey of purpose-led change that revitalizes our connection to te Taiao and ensures a thriving legacy for generations to come.