Soil Health Edition

THE WHOLE STORY COMIC

Keeping Agriculture on the table



Rabobank

For our shining stars, our tamariki, our rangatahi, the next generation. We can't do this without you.

This comic has been inspired by the Regenerative Arable Transitions case study collection developed by Quorum Sense. We gratefully acknowledge the farmers who generously shared their experiences, challenges, and insights into regenerative arable farming. Their willingness to document and reflect on their journeys has helped shape the themes explored in this story.

https://www.quorumsense.org.nz/content/regenerative-arable-transitions

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Rabobank – proud supporters of The Whole Story comic book series

Rabobank is New Zealand's only specialist food and agribusiness bank. Food and agri is in our DNA. We were set up in the Netherlands over 125 years ago as a cooperative – by farmers, for farmers. Today we operate in 36 countries and we're among the world's largest financial institutions.

Here in New Zealand, we have a single focus on food and agribusiness. Our four regional Rabo Client Councils are made up of Rabobank's farming client representatives who work with us to address key industry and community challenges in farming and agribusiness, which are linked to six key themes:



Funding support for initiatives identified by our Client Councils is provided by the Rabo Community Fund – a fund set up in 2021 and backed by an annual contribution from the Rabobank Group.

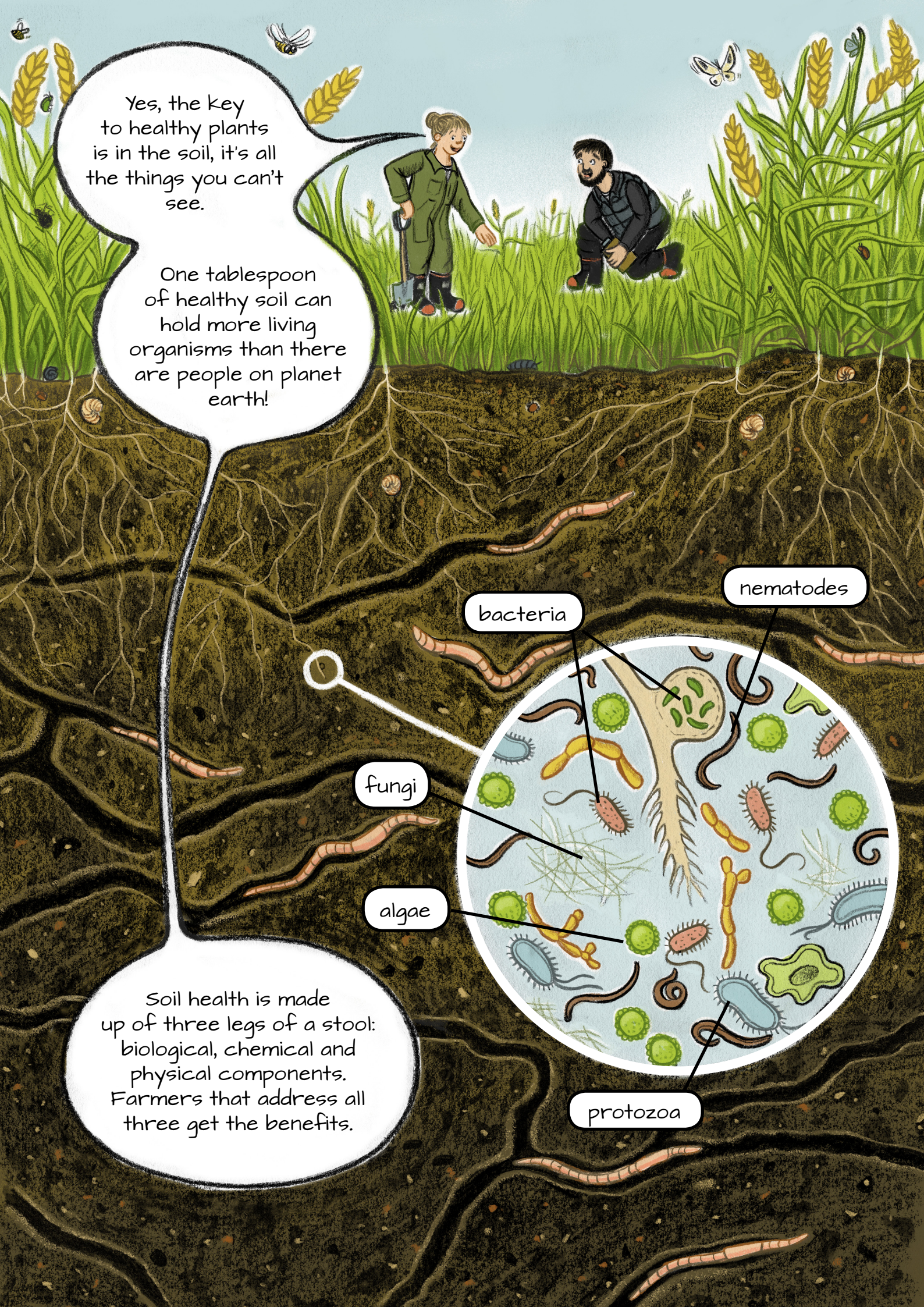
The Whole Story comic book series is closely aligned with several of our Client Council themes and Rabobank is very proud to support this initiative. A great aspect of the comic books is they come with teaching resources that provide opportunities for students to further enhance their knowledge. The books also do a great job highlighting career opportunities in agribusiness, as well as profiling all the exciting work being done to improve sustainable farming practices and to introduce new technology to the sector.

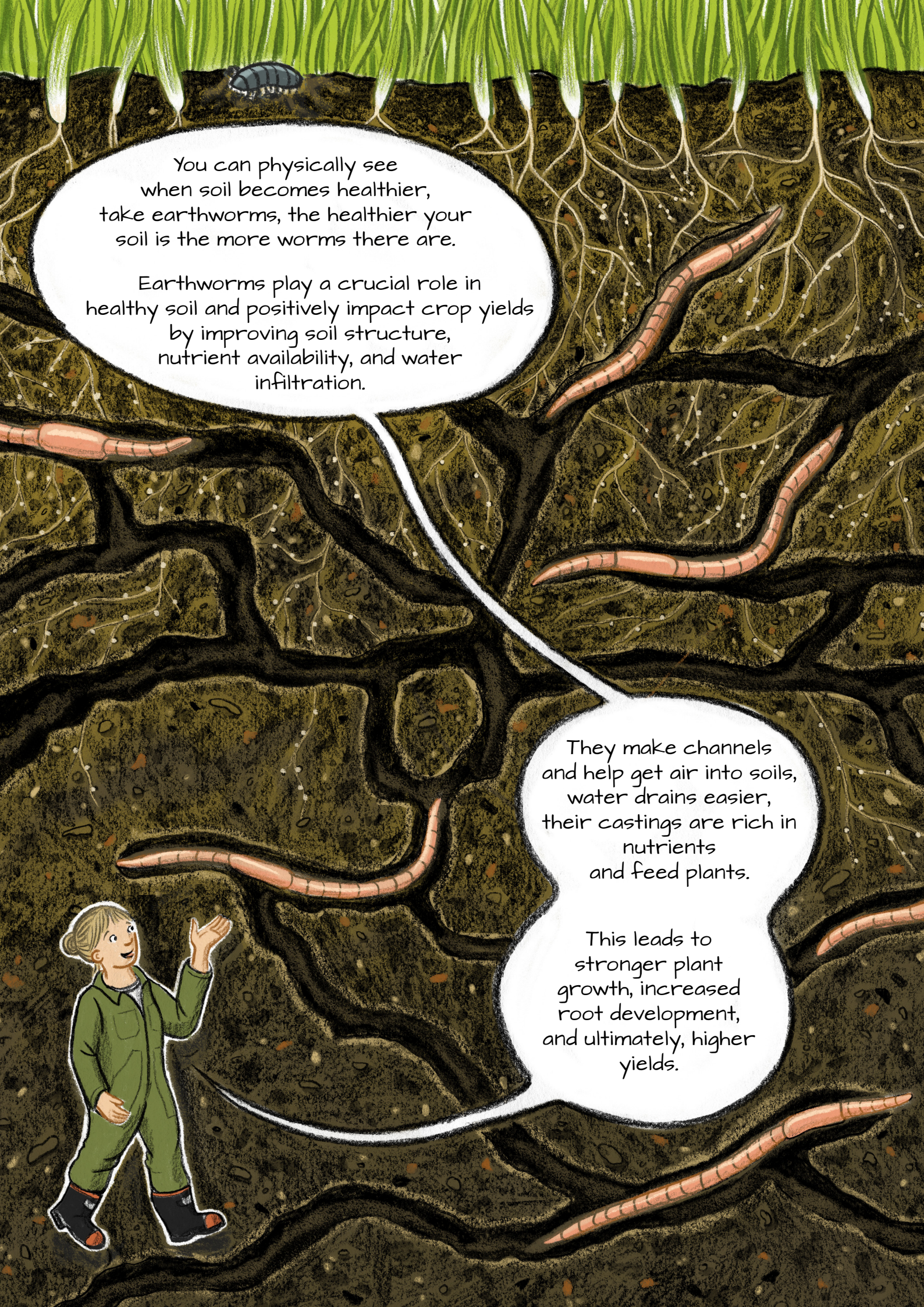
Enjoy the books!

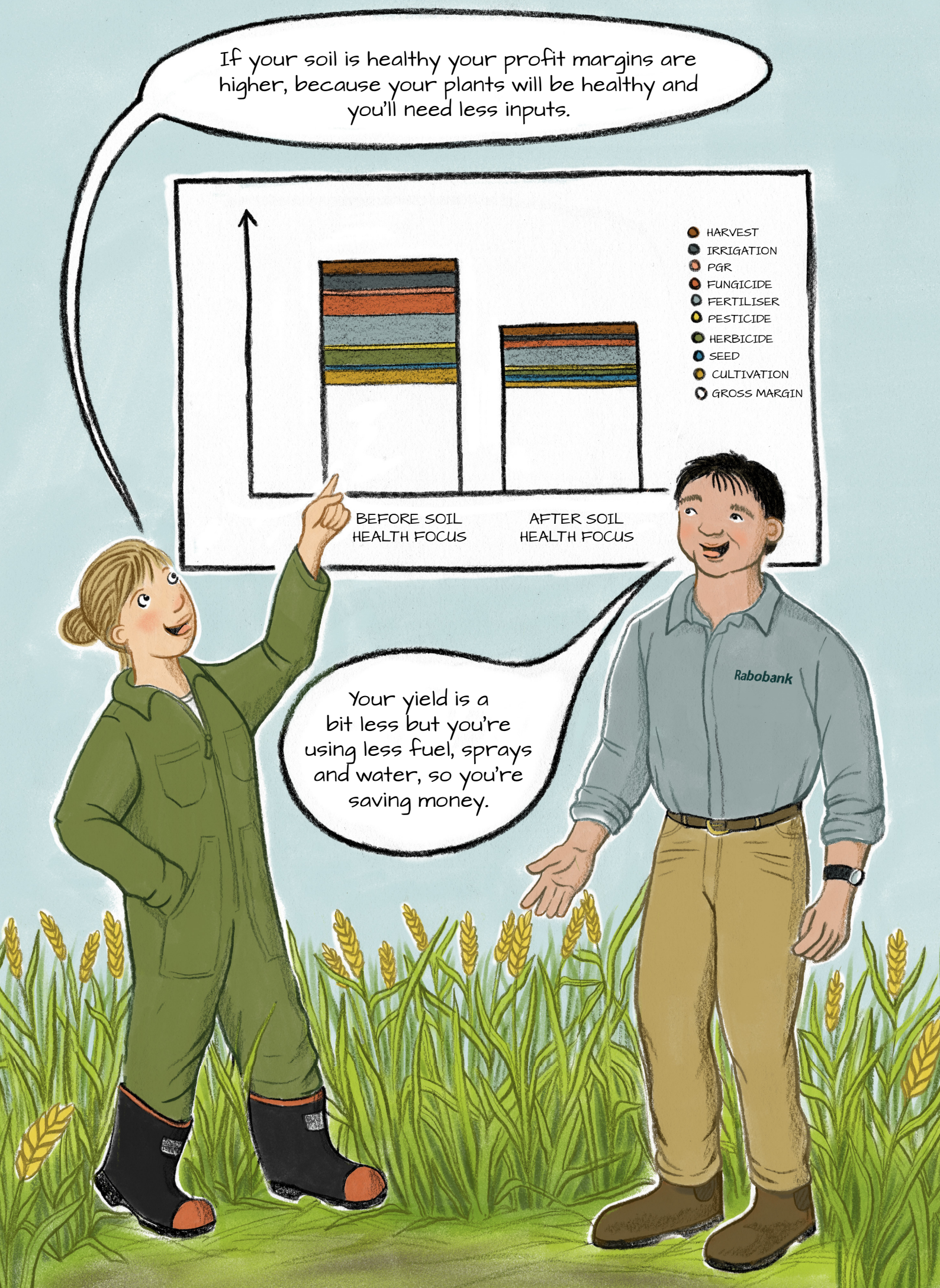
The Rabobank Team

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Wow look at your wheat, it looks so good.
I've never seen healthier, you must be using a lot of agricultural chemicals to get crops to look this good?
Nah mate, you're standing on the answer. It all starts in the soil!
Huh, the soil?


Yes, the key to healthy plants is in the soil, it's all the things you can't see.
One tablespoon of healthy soil can hold more living organisms than there are people on planet earth!
Soil health is made up of three legs of a stool: biological, chemical and physical components. Farmers that address all three get the benefits.
nematodes
bacteria
fungi
algae
protozoa

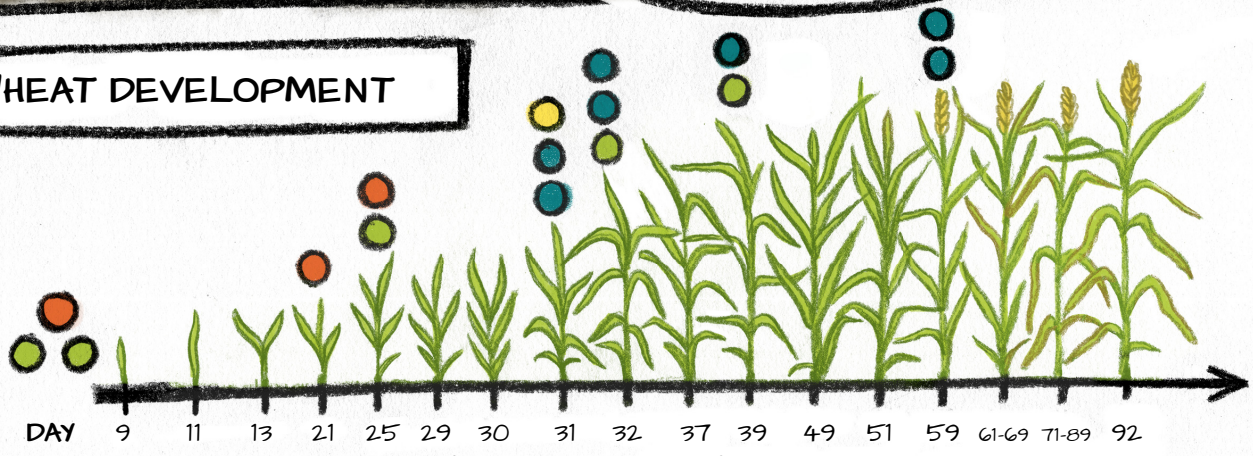

You can physically see when soil becomes healthier, take earthworms, the healthier your soil is the more worms there are.
Earthworms play a crucial role in healthy soil and positively impact crop yields by improving soil structure, nutrient availability, and water infiltration.
They make channels and help get air into soils, water drains easier, their castings are rich in nutrients and feed plants.
This leads to stronger plant growth, increased root development, and ultimately, higher yields.


If your soil is healthy your profit margins are higher, because your plants will be healthy and you'll need less inputs.
HARVEST
IRRIGATION
PGR
FUNGICIDE
FERTILISER
PESTICIDE
HERBICIDE
SEED
CULTIVATION
GROSS MARGIN
BEFORE SOIL HEALTH FOCUS
AFTER SOIL HEALTH FOCUS
Your yield is a bit less but you're using less fuel, sprays and water, so you're saving money.
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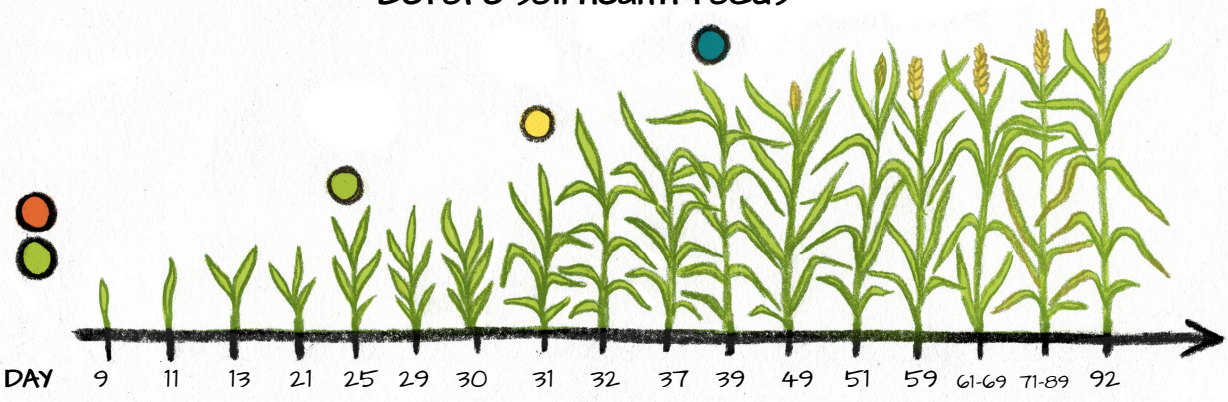

Canterbury arable farmers are increasing the health and profitability of their farm systems by building soil health.
I use less agri-chemicals and I do simple things, like not driving on a paddock when it's wet, so I don't compact soils and give it space to breathe.
I use 'no-till', which is a way to plant without plowing. Seeds are sown directly into the unplowed soil, often with minimal disturbance.



WHEAT DEVELOPMENT



Before soil health focus



After soil health focus

INPUTS: PESTICIDE HERBICIDE FUNGICIDE PGR

Soil health goes beyond plant health.
Professor Pablo Gregorini and a team from Lincoln University show healthier soils lead to healthier plants and animals-and potentially better quality meat and milk with improved nutritional value for humans.




Our ultimate goal is to produce healthy nutritious food for everybody and letting soil do its job so we can thrive!
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The Whole Story Comic - Keeping Agriculture on the Table

Project Summary:

New Zealand's agricultural sector is vital to our economy, environment, and way of life, but it faces challenges in attracting the next generation of talented change agents. This innovative education series, featuring engaging digital comics with associated lessons and downloadable resources, aims to keep agriculture on the table for young people by showcasing the exciting opportunities within the farming sector.

Each comic will dive into a different aspect of sustainable agriculture - from solar energy, precision farming, innovative technologies, and regenerative practices - bringing these concepts to life in a relatable and engaging way. This series is designed to connect students with the diverse and evolving career pathways in agriculture, from science and engineering to environmental management and technology. By highlighting the role of sustainable innovations in farming, this project inspires students to see agriculture not just through the lens of traditional farming, but as a dynamic field where they can make a real impact on New Zealand's future.

Why it Matters:

I*nspiring the Next Generation of Agricultural Innovators*
Agriculture is an evolving industry that integrates science, technology, and environmental management. By showcasing these innovations, the comic series helps students see the diverse and exciting career opportunities available in agriculture, encouraging them to stay engaged in the sector and explore pathways that combine their interests in STEM (science, tech, engineering and mathematics), sustainability, and food production.

Supporting Communities and Future-Proofing the Workforce
By engaging students with real-world examples of sustainable farming practices, this series fosters community awareness and helps build the next generation of skilled professionals who will drive New Zealand's agricultural sector forward. The project connects learning with local and global challenges, empowering students to envision themselves as part of the solution.

Addressing New Zealand's Agricultural and Environmental Challenges
As New Zealand strives to become more sustainable, agriculture plays a crucial role in balancing food production with environmental stewardship. This comic series and associated lessons will introduce students to a range of cutting-edge technologies-from renewable energy and precision farming to regenerative practices and water conservation - that can help reduce environmental impact, enhance efficiency and build resilience in our agricultural sector.

Note for Teachers:

We have developed comprehensive lesson plans that are NZ curriculum aligned and activity guides to support you in delivering this unit. There are also suggestions for supplementary resources such as videos, case studies, and interactive tools to help make the content more relatable and engaging for your students.

As kaiako, your role is to guide students through these explorations, fostering their curiosity and supporting their learning journey. Feel free to adapt the activities and materials to suit the needs of your students and the unique dynamics of your classroom. While their is a clear progression through the lessons in this unit, you can absolutely just use one or two of the lessons with your students

We hope this unit sparks your students' interest in both sustainability and the potential careers in agriculture. By guiding your students through this unit, you are preparing our rangatahi for a future where they can make a positive impact.

Arohanui



The Whole Story is a B Corp Certified, social enterprise with a purpose to **inspire sustainability** and **empower farmers.** The team are based in Otago, but work nationwide offering both in-person and remote opportunities for farmers to connect with sustainability.



Writer: Gerhard Uys is an experienced freelance Agricultural writer and photographer based in Invercargill, New Zealand. He focuses on stories that empower rural communities to make decisions and those that foster a mindset of sustainability.



Illustrator: Emma Scheltema is an illustrator based in Palmerston North. With training in both biology and visual communication, she loves to make complex information easier to understand, and highlight strange and wonderful aspects of the natural world.

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