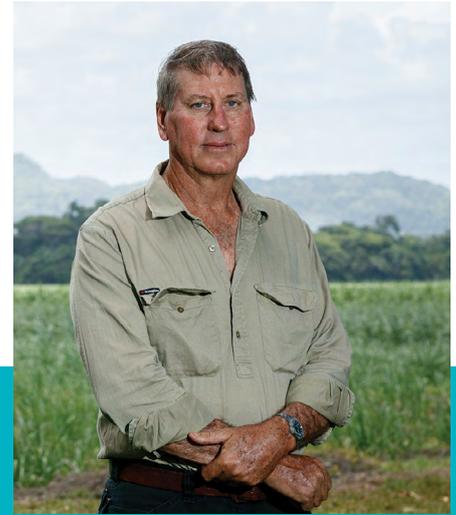


NUTRIENT PLANNING HELPS REDUCE FERTILISER BILLS

Supplied by WTSIP



Cane growers across the Wet Tropics region are reaping the benefits from one-on-one nutrient planning being delivered by the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership.

Funded by the Australian Government's Reef Trust III program, WTSIP's team of 11 Extension Officers is providing individualised support to growers to help them improve farm runoff by refining their fertiliser use.

Drew Watson operates several cane farms throughout the Mossman district and says he finds his whole-of-farm nutrient management plan a valuable tool that saves him time and hassle.

"I use my nutrient management plan all the time, it just makes sense to have everything all in one place. And, with different staff working on different farms, it makes it easier to keep things on track," he said.

"It also makes it a lot easier to order fertiliser. I don't have to chase up individual soil samples and

recommendations to work out what I need on a particular block. I can just refer to the plan and confidently order a truck load of fertiliser, knowing the right product is going onto the right block."

Daryl Parker, WTSIP Regional Extension Officer based in Mossman Agricultural Services, said the idea of nutrient management plans wasn't new but that the current format being used by WTSIP had been specifically developed by local cane experts.

"Developing a whole of farm nutrient management plan is a very consultative process between growers and our extension officers.

"They work together to analyse soil tests and farm maps to match inputs better to crop requirements and save on costs," he said.

"It maintains the integrity of the Six Easy Steps process and importantly, at the end of the process, the plan belongs to the grower so they can give the information to other advisors to use."

Growers in the Wet Tropics who are interested in developing a Nutrient Management Plan are encouraged to contact their local WTSIP Extension Officer. Visit www.wtsip.org.au/team to find your local contact. ■

Pg 6: (Top) CANEGROWERS MOSSMAN Chairman Drew Watson. (Bottom) Gordonvale grower John Ferrando discusses the development of his nutrient management plan with WTSIP Extension Officer Joel Tierney.

Pg 7: Paul Mizzi and WTSIP Innovation Extension Officer Suzette Argent at the project trial site where soya beans have been planted in preparation.

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