

Cane BMP Newsletter

JUNE 2013, ISSUE 1

Welcome to the first edition of the CANEGROWERS cane best management practice (BMP) newsletter. This quarterly newsletter is your guide to the latest news and information on the Cane BMP program across Queensland.

The aim of the newsletter is to provide growers with regular updates on the progress of the Cane BMP program, case studies, useful web-links and notice of upcoming events.

Key milestones

Under an agreement with the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, the CANEGROWERS Cane BMP program will deliver the following key milestones over the next 12 months:

1. Facilitate approximately 560 growers (with accredited environmental risk management plans) to complete the Cane BMP self-assessment.
2. 1520 growers complete self-assessment (75% from Mackay/Whitsunday, Burdekin, wet tropics).
3. 380 of the 1520 growers completed self-assessment have achieved Cane BMP recognition by industry assessor meeting legislative requirements for reef protection (specifically for the following modules: water system management; pest, disease and weed management, and soil health and plant nutrition management).

This project has received funding support from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.



Cane BMP program overview

CANEGROWERS has embarked on an exciting new project that will see the cane industry move towards a world-class best practice system for sugarcane growing in Australia.

CANEGROWERS has secured \$3.5M in funding for development and delivery of a Cane BMP program in partnership with the Queensland Government, in an outcome that will give the cane industry an opportunity to clearly demonstrate their best management practices in the production of sugarcane.



The recent Innisfail Cane BMP workshop

As key milestones throughout the project are met, the Queensland Government has committed to unwinding the regulatory controls currently imposed on the industry.

Although the Cane BMP program is entirely voluntary for growers, the rate at which regulation can be wound back is directly linked to the rate at which cane growers adopt the new industry-led program.

Information generated from participating in the Cane BMP program will be owned and managed solely by the industry and will be collated to help support industry productivity, extension, research and development. It will underpin industry strategy and direction, and provide a measure on progress towards achieving industry best management standards. Collated data will not identify individual farms.

CANEGROWERS, in consultation with industry, is currently developing a series of web based education and training tools aimed at addressing the whole operation of the farm. Growers can choose to participate in one or more modules, undertake a self-assessment of how they meet the standards set within each module; and access industry extension support and training to obtain Cane BMP accreditation.

Another key benefit of the program will be the opportunity for growers to achieve formal qualifications that recognise learning that has occurred through life and work based experiences in whatever form that may have been achieved. The recognition of prior learning (RPL) process is a way of achieving formal recognition for growers' current skills and knowledge.

Other learning that has been achieved through more formal learning processes eg. short courses and class work, will also be recognised through this process. In fact, all current skills and knowledge that growers possess will be included in the assessment for a qualification such as a Certificate III, Certificate IV or Diploma in their area of experience.

We look forward to your participation in this new and exciting project. For further information please contact Malcolm on 07 3864 6472 or email malcolm_petrie@canegrowers.com.au.

See page two for all the details. ►

Cane BMP program – the details

Since the project's commencement in January 2013, CANEGROWERS has embarked on an intensive engagement strategy to gain industry feedback on the preferred design and delivery of the Cane BMP program.

The engagement strategy involved workshops in 14 CANEGROWERS districts including Proserpine, Mossman, Rocky Point, Mackay, Tully, Herbert River, Innisfail, Burdekin (including Pioneer/Kalamia), Tablelands, Bundaberg, Isis, Maryborough and Cairns (Babinda and Mulgrave). Workshops were also held in four CANEGROWERS regions including Southern, Central, Burdekin and Northern. The workshops were held from 26 February to 8 May 2013.

District and regional working groups were established by the CANEGROWERS district offices under the guidance of a terms of reference developed by CANEGROWERS and endorsed by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, co-funders of the Cane BMP program. The working groups, including a technical working group, will provide ongoing input and support in the design and delivery of the program.

The workshops focused on seeking industry feedback and considered the following elements:

1. **Number and scope of Cane BMP modules to be included in the program aimed at addressing whole-of-farm operations. The following seven Cane BMP modules have been supported and include:**
 - Farm business management.
 - Landscape and biodiversity management.
 - Workplace health and safety process management.
 - Crop production and harvest management.
 - Water system management.
 - Pest, disease and weed management.
 - Soil health and plant nutrition management.
2. **The makeup and structure of each module will be based on a similar format and sequence used in the Compass (Industry Self –Assessment) Workbook and includes:**
 - Technical information overview.
 - Best Management Practice.
 - Growers checklist principles of practice.
 - Identify gaps in practice.
 - Strengths and weakness of practice.
 - Action plan eg. nutrient management plan.
 - Legal requirements.
 - Technical support/training/recognised prior learning linkages.
3. **The program will support an industry assessment and accreditation process including:**
 - The online Cane BMP accreditation program can be undertaken individually or facilitated in groups by Cane BMP extension staff.
 - Verification of growers achieving accreditation through self-assessment will be undertaken by locally trained Cane BMP extension staff hosted by CANEGROWERS district offices.
 - Ongoing industry assessments will be undertaken by local Cane BMP extension staff every three to five years.
 - Independent third party industry audits will be randomly utilised as part of the programs monitoring, evaluation and performance review.
4. **How will the data captured by the program be managed:**
 - Data capture and reporting will be at an aggregated scale reporting on industry practices.
 - Data hosting will be managed by CANEGROWERS district offices and CANEGROWERS Queensland.
 - Data collected will support individual growers to improve profitability, productivity and stewardship.
 - Data collected will support CANEGROWERS representation and policy development.
 - Data collected will provide government with information on the best management practices undertaken across the industry and assist with reef water quality protection plan reporting eg. number of growers using Six Easy Steps.



The recent Proserpine Cane BMP workshop

Key messages from the workshops

1. Strong support for a CANEGROWERS-led, industry-driven Cane BMP program.
2. Support an industry-based assessment and third party auditing process to achieve industry rigour, credibility and consistency.
3. Support a Cane BMP focus that delivers profitability, productivity and sustainability.
4. Acknowledge the importance and need for improved data collection to support grower, industry and government data requirements.

PROFILE: Janice Nelson

Cane BMP Accreditation and Training Coordinator

(Manager Training and Development CANEGROWERS Mackay)



Janice Nelson has been working at CANEGROWERS Mackay since 2004, progressing her experience and interest in workforce development by providing opportunities for farmers and their workers in Mackay and Plane Creek to gain national accreditation.

Having always worked in the education sector, first as a teacher and then as a student service provider, Janice was able to transfer her skills and knowledge to identify, progress and initiate a number of training opportunities and projects including the Mackay Whitsunday Agribusiness Skills Formation Strategy, Strategic Investment Fund Project, Gateway Schools, Reef Guardian Farmers, Seasonal Workforce Strategy and Workforce Development Plan.

"My underlying motivation has always been to provide opportunities by which individuals within the sugar industry can achieve and be recognised for their competent and proficient practices," Janice said.

"The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program which we have run in Mackay for the last five years is the realisation of this aspiration. Joining the BMP (Best Management Practice) project team is a logical progression for me and I look forward to engaging in this new challenge to further assist farmers to be accredited for their achievements in realising environmental and business sustainability."

Papales win Rural Award

Burdekin growers Vince and Rita Papale won the Rural Award at the Premier's Sustainability Awards held in Brisbane this month. The Papales were nominated for implementing a range of clever environmental projects on their property including an impressive wetland.

Through such projects, the Papales have lifted their farm's productivity and water efficiency while minimising environmental impact on their land and the nearby Great Barrier Reef.



Burdekin cane growers Vince and Rita Papale (middle) with sponsors of the Rural Award, David Foote from Australian Country Choice (left) and David Stout from Coles (right).

Preserving the use of diuron for sugarcane production in catchments adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef

As the Queensland sugarcane industry is adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, there is concern that off-site movement of diuron from run-off during rain events and the wet season can adversely impact water quality and therefore the resilience and health of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem.

Diuron is an important residual herbicide for effective weed management in the Queensland sugarcane industry however, its continued use is dependent on a review of environmental risk by the Australian Pesticide & Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). Against the backdrop of the Great Barrier Reef, CANEGROWERS Australia was concerned the loss or reduction of diuron rates and a no-use period during the wet season would create an adverse outcome to both the production system and environment. This overview is an account of the management activities undertaken by CANEGROWERS, to attempt to ensure appropriate science was applied to the decision.

CANEGROWERS undertook an analysis of the science, diuron usage rates and climate variability of Queensland to provide counterargument to the APVMA's findings that diuron posed an unacceptable risk to water quality from runoff during the wet season.

CANEGROWERS worked with an independent scientific expert and two chemical companies to critique the APVMA's modelling methodology. A survey of growers was conducted to determine industry usage rates, application methods and practices to support risk mitigation through industry best practices. A climatologist was engaged to review the climate variability data of Queensland cane growing regions to determine how Pacific Ocean El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) affects no-use periods based on a calendar year.

The modelling review identified the APVMA's assessment was excessively protective. The grower survey results supported an industry best practice rate of 1.8 kg active constituent (ac) per ha per year. The survey also identified a wide range of best practices and that diuron was central to weed management. The review of the climate variability in Queensland identified significant differences in wet season start and finish dates directly attributable to El Niño–Southern Oscillation. This suggested the no-use period for diuron application was not the optimal strategy for long-term sustainability.

The review reinforced the complexity of cane growing across Queensland, the uptake of best practice and the support of diuron. Alternative modelling data and outcomes were provided to the APVMA. Their decision to amend label and use conditions was made in November 2012.

For further information contact CANEGROWERS Manager Environment & Natural Resources, Matt Kealley on 07 3864 6473 or email matt_kealley@canegrowers.com.au.

Watch this space

The Cane Best Management Practice Technical Working Group will be convened on 30 July 2013 in Brisbane to review the first drafts of the seven BMP modules.

Following the review, it is proposed that workshops with growers will be held to trial the modules before being finalised and posted on the Cane BMP website www.canegrowers.com.au/page/Growers_Toolkit/BMP_News/

Malcolm Petrie is your project director for the Cane BMP program

Malcolm Petrie joined CANEGROWERS in January 2013. Malcolm has more than 13 years of experience in project managing Australian, State and local government funded natural resource management programs. He has strong project management experience, stakeholder engagement, facilitation, and project design and delivery.

Malcolm has a strong industry knowledge of sugarcane and agriculture. He has a great deal of experience providing policy advice on a wide range of Australian and state government legislation, policies and programs that closely aligned with the sugarcane industry. Malcolm also possesses hands on expertise with more than ten years of experience in managing a horticultural enterprise.

Malcolm will manage all facets of the Cane BMP program development and delivery. For further information please contact Malcolm on (07) 3864 6472 or email malcolm_petrie@canegrowers.com.au.



What is Reef Guardians for farmers and graziers?

The Reef Guardians program is for farmers and graziers who are passionate and forward thinking about their farming practices, their industries, their communities and the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

The aim of the Reef Guardians program is to support growers through public recognition and promotion of their environmental stewardship actions. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is keen to work with farmers to help promote best practice land quality management which benefits them as well as addressing issues such as poor quality water runoff entering the Great Barrier Reef.



On a Reef Guardian's farm:

- Soil health is managed for continuous improvement.
- Water resources are managed for ongoing efficiencies.
- Energy is managed for improved efficiencies.
- The farmer has a vision for the property's biodiversity.
- There is continuous improvement in the management of waste and farming by-products.
- The farmer demonstrates social responsibility.
- The farmer enables decisions based upon long-term sustainability of the property rather than short-term profit.



Paul Gregory, Gordonvale cane grower and Reef Guardian

Ten cane farmers, from Cairns to Mackay, have become Reef Guardian Farmers as part of the pilot to develop the program. As the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority plans to expand the Reef Guardian Farmer program, they will work with CANEGROWERS to ensure that the Reef Guardian program and the Cane Best Management Program add value to each other.

"Farmers don't talk about it much, but many of us think of ourselves as custodians [of the land] and make decisions accordingly, we just need to get better at promoting it. That is why I decided to take up the opportunity to be involved in Reef Guardian Farmers. I liked the fact that it is a voluntary program, developed by us, it wasn't something imposed by government. The Reef Guardians program publicly recognises the good things happening on farms. There's also a focus on continuously improving what we do, and that appeals to me a lot." Paul Gregory, Gordonvale canegrower and Reef Guardian.

For more information contact:

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