



Driven by growers. Used by growers. Owned by growers.

Momentum builds for Smartcane BMP

By Mick Quirk, Smartcane BMP Project Manager

Momentum is building in the Smartcane BMP program. Over a thousand growers have now registered and 844 of these have completed the core modules (soils/nutrients, irrigation/drainage, pests/diseases) via self-assessment.

Further, 22 growers have now achieved accreditation through an independent audit process. We expect at least another 80 growers will seek accreditation by the end of this year.

This means that completion of core modules by self-assessment has been achieved by 24% of Queensland's growers representing 40% of the total cane production area. In the first half of next year, we should have 5% of growers, and 10% of the cane area, accredited in Smartcane BMP.

Smartcane BMP provides a credible industry-led pathway for growers to demonstrate their stewardship of the land.

It permits the grower to tell the how, and why, of their farm management.



BMP program's turn to be audited

Smartcane BMP commissioned GREENCAP consultants to conduct a third party audit of the program's auditing and certification procedure. The audits of farms agreed with the certification decisions previously made, showing the reliability and credibility of the program.

Its major recommendation regarding process was to move to on-farm audits, from the remote audits currently employed. On-farm auditing is standard practice across similar types of programs. The implications of such a change in audit procedure are currently being evaluated and a recommendation will be made shortly to CANEGROWERS and other project partners. The GREENCAP report also recommended a number of improvements to the program's administrative processes.



CANEGROWERS Herbert River Manager Peter Sheedy congratulates grower Frank Russo.

Group work a big hit for Burdekin BMP

By Terry Granshaw, Smartcane BMP facilitator

The Burdekin region has five farming entities accredited in the three key modules (soil health & nutrient management, irrigation & drainage, weed pest & disease management) and three growers well down the track to completing all seven of the Smartcane BMP modules.

A further 22 growers are currently working towards accreditation while, in the past three weeks, 30 additional growers have completed the core modules via self-assessment.

Since taking over the Smartcane BMP program in the region, Burdekin Productivity Services (BPS) has taken a close look at what makes growers most comfortable when undertaking the self-assessments.

Field officers are now selecting around five like-minded growers

in their areas for workshops which I facilitate. This group size seems perfect.

The workshop is paper-based and all three modules are completed in a session lasting no more than two and a half hours.

The information is then uploaded onto the Smartcane BMP website by staff of BPS. Grower discussion is encouraged around the questions and so far we have had positive feedback from participants.

These discussions have led to headland talk which has led to more growers requesting that they be part of the program.

Through the work of BPS to help growers achieve BMP accreditation, Smartcane BMP is now being seen as a tool for growers to improve their farms, for profitability and productivity.

Herbert River accredits two more growers

By Maria Battoraro, Smartcane BMP facilitator

The Herbert River district has recently accredited two more growers in the three core modules of Smartcane BMP, bringing its total of accredited farms to seven.

The latest growers to be congratulated are **Frank Russo** from Hawkins Creek and **Steve Adams** representing the Adams Brothers.

Workshops are continuing with the recent media stories about the reactivation of Reef Regulations sparking more interest in BMP.

At the workshops I am now running through the option for growers to keep records via the Smartcane BMP website. This option has appealed to a number of growers and I have assisted them with the setting up and use of this.

Even growers who use mobile phones quite a lot find that entering information into their phones can be difficult while they are handling machinery, chemicals or fertiliser so they are jotting down the information



Smartcane BMP Facilitator Maria Battoraro with accredited grower Steven Adams.

in a notepad and entering on the PC when convenient.

I have pointed out the advantages of this record-keeping system in that they cannot lose their records even if their PC fails, and it provides all relevant fields for recording practices.

I have also allayed their fears that the information may be passed on to others, as it is stored on a server in Brisbane and only aggregate data is reported.

MYTH VS REALITY

MYTH

GPS guidance to establish rows is a requirement for BMP

BUSTED

FACT

If GPS is not used, the grower just needs to indicate how he marks out for planting.

MYTH

There is a specific row spacing required for BMP

BUSTED

FACT

There is no specific row spacing for BMP. BMP is met if most machinery wheel spacings match the row spacing

MYTH

Accreditation requires a lot of time to upload photos and records to the website

BUSTED

FACT

Photos are not required to be uploaded. Some evidence, such as nutrient management records, need uploading however, assistance is provided by your district BMP coordinator

MYTH

Digital/computer records are needed to meet BMP

BUSTED

FACT

The few records required may be in any form. Diary entries are fine, as are paper reports such as soil tests. Growers may keep records in a book, on their computer/GPS or in AgDat.

Module review and training plan underway

Sugar Research Australia (SRA) has been commissioned for two roles in the BMP program:

- Undertake an annual review of the BMP modules and recommend any changes to ensure the practice standards remain contemporary and consistent with research and development and industry innovations. The first review workshop will be held in early November.
- Develop and deliver a training program for growers that assist them to improve their management practices and meet accreditation requirements. This is being coordinated by SRA's Belinda Billings who is working with various parties to ensure the program is complementary to existing training initiatives.

Smartcane BMP Farms & Areas

1035	growers registered for BMP (29% of growers, 45% of cane area)
844	completed one core module by self-assessment (24% of growers, 40% of cane area)
22	growers completed core modules by accreditation (5 applications under review)