

# Zonal Tillage

2011



## Zonal tillage improves soil structure and reduces compaction

### AgriServ provides expertise and equipment to trial on farms

Zonal tillage in sugarcane farming refers to when only the row area is cultivated and not the entire field in preparation for planting. It is widely agreed that zonal tillage provides a number of benefits for the soil and the grower. Zonal tillage improves soil structure as less passes are needed to prepare the bed for planting. Also, when combined with controlled traffic which reduces compaction, water absorption increases. This improvement in soil structure and

reduction in compaction reduces the loss of soil and particulate nutrients from the field. Zonal tillage also saves time from less passes and lowers fuel costs as lower axle load machines can be used.

BSES Mackay has been running a project to promote the use of zonal tillage on cane farms since 2004 with great success. With funding from Reef Rescue (previously SRDC) the project showcases zonal tillage by providing the opportunity for growers to trial equipment before committing to a zonal tillage and controlled traffic farming system.

AgriServ provides the equipment on site with technical expertise to demonstrate how the equipment works. The equipment can then be left on site to trial for a couple of days allowing land managers to assess whether the equipment is suitable for their farm and soil types. This service is provided free of charge and includes delivery and removal of equipment from site, demonstrations and technical guidance, and the overall maintenance of the equipment.

"Each farm is different so what works on one farm doesn't necessarily work for another," said Brad Hussey Project manager for

Reef Rescue is funded through the federal government's 'Caring for our Country' program.



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BSES Mackay. "The project enables growers to trial a range of zonal tillage equipment to find what works best for their farm."

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- 3 row wavy disk cultivator with crumble roller
- Single row wavy disk cultivator with crumble roller
- Bed renovator
- Zonal ripper
- Zonal rotary hoe

If the trial proves to be useful and the equipment suited to the farm, land managers can then make an informed decision to purchase or build the equipment. Zonal tillage is an eligible activity under Reef Rescue Water Quality Grants and as such land managers could be eligible for up to 50% of the cost of the project. As zonal tillage is a soil management activity, to be eligible growers must be on or convert to controlled traffic farming where your row spacing's match your wheel spacing's. "The project has been hugely successful to date in demonstrating the benefits of zonal tillage, we aim to continue to provide this service and will investigate possible new equipment and said AgriServ modifications," Extension Officer Gae Plunkett. Continuing to update and provide equipment that demonstrates best management practices ensures land managers are using the most sustainable methods both economically and environmentally.

If you are interested in seeing how zonal tillage equipment would work on your farm contact AgriServ and arrange a time to have the equipment delivered to your farm.



## Reef Catchments

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body who oversees the Reef Rescue program in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region on behalf of the federal government.

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