

REEF RESCUE

2012

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(07) 4968 4200



Don and Pauline Brown

Improved In-Crop Management

Reef Rescue helped Don and Pauline Brown implement a range of improved in-crop management practices on their lychee farm. With the funding, they were able to improve the accuracy and efficiency of their nutrient and chemical applications and maintain excellent ground cover between their rows.

In 2010, Don and Pauline applied for Reef Rescue funding to help purchase a side throwing slasher and fertiliser spreader for use within their lychee orchard. Don said “with the slasher, we are able to take one of the sides off and then when mowing the inter-row throw the residue in under the trees to act as a mulch.”

The Brown’s also allow all of their pruning’s to stay under the trees for even more mulch cover and this helps increase organic matter, retain moisture and suppress weed growth amongst the trees so they don’t need to spray underneath them. Don added, “All we need is maybe to spray some knockdown along the rows to control any weeds heading into the trees.”

With the new fertiliser spreader the Browns have changed from using chemical based fertiliser to applying organic products. Don explained that, “the spreader is able to be changed to accurately apply a range of products but we now prefer to use things like chicken pellets.”

The organic fertiliser is thrown in evenly under the trees and as Don points out; combined with the increased mulch cover, when it rains it doesn’t go anywhere. To help provide the trace elements that lychees need, they also use a foliar application to get in under the leaves where it can be absorbed.

In 2012, Don and Pauline were keen to improve their application of chemicals within the trees for control of pests that impact on their crop.



About the farm...

Don and Pauline Brown own a 22 ha farm along the banks of Gillinbin Creek, around 70 km south of Mackay. They first moved there in 1977 and in 1998 planted their first 200 lychee trees. Over the years the area under lychee production has grown with 2000 trees now planted over 8 ha. The trees are set up on 8 meter rows with 5 to 2.5 meters between them depending on the variety. The Brown’s also grow strawberries to supply local stores and have developed up some pangola pasture to run a few head of cattle.



Gillinbin Creek

To do this they successfully applied for a 500 litre Mister and are very keen to start to use it.

Don said that “controlling pests is a key part of managing a lychee crop and our old application method was inefficient. With this new applicator we will be able to use a reduced amount of product and have better crop cover which will help reduce losses in any run-off.”

The Browns also use trickle tape and sprayers for under canopy irrigation and some of this is linked to a fertigation system and storm water

structures to capture any run-off. One important thing they pointed out was the establishment of wind breaks

around the property and the real benefit this has had for their crop.

With regards to the Reef Rescue program, Don and Pauline both said that “without the help of Anna Geddes from Growcom they would not have got involved in the program.”

They explained that if there was no funding available, or they could only get 20% funding, they would have maybe only completed one of these great projects.

“With the slasher, we are able to take one of the sides off and then when mowing the inter-row throw the residue in under the trees to act as a mulch”



OUTCOMES



Reduced risk of chemical losses from efficient, accurate application



Reduced risk of losses by capturing stormwater run-off



Reduced risk of nutrient losses from accurate under canopy application

Reef Catchments

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body who oversees the Reef Rescue program in the Mackay Whitsunday region for the federal government.

Contact the Reef Rescue team at Reef Catchments on (07) 4968 4216 or email: reception@reefcatchments.com.au