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## **DIY fertiliser a winning concept for Eton cane farmer**

### **Farmers invited to learn more at upcoming field day Wednesday 24th June.**

According to Kym Kruse, Director of RegenAG, for farmers, seeing is believing.

Demonstrations are taking place on a North Eton cane farm and local growers are being invited to take a look and learn more.

For the last 12 months, Eton cane farmer Michael Attard has been working with Mr Kruse to test a whole systems approach to production, which includes the application of bio-fertilisers, made DIY on the farm.

"We help train farmers on how to produce their own inputs. The Attard's have jumped in and are making significant practice change over a 100 hectare crop area. They have created a range of different inputs, and modified equipment to address how these are best applied," Mr Kruse said.

"What we are ready to present now are the results from the first 12 months of this program."

He said results to date were encouraging, pointing to potential savings in production cost; as well as gains in yield and improvements in soil health.

"For example, the water holding capacity of the soil has improved to the point that the growers have saved more than \$1500 in pumping costs, thanks to a decreased reliance on irrigation," Mr Kruse said.

"At this stage, they are also expecting a yield increase and the results of yield data will be presented at the field day."

Participants will also have the opportunity to observe simple equipment modifications that can be made on-farm for optimal application.

"For example, the Attard's have modified a spray rig unit to carry three 2000 litre tanks, capable of application over 20 hectares in an hour. They have also been extremely innovative in setting up a mechanism that allows them to fertigate, directly injecting the bio-ferments in with the irrigation water to maintain nutrition to the plants during that period." Mr Kruse said.

"In all industries as with cane, margins are getting tighter, so these kinds of savings can make a big difference economically together with having an environmental benefit."

Mr Kruse said while the Attard's still used synthetic fertilisers such as N, the trial pointed to a rapidly growing interest from sugar farmers seeking alternatives.

"What we are seeing is a marked increase in interest from typically conventional farmers who want to head a more biological way, but are wondering where to turn.

"There is a real mindset change happening and the reason is being driven by declining yields, declining soil health, the desire to reduce nitrogen inputs and tighter and tighter margins.

"There is a lot of pressure on farmers and the economics are forcing people to look at what they are currently doing and say 'how can I do this better?'"

Reef Catchments Sustainable Ag officer, Daniel O'Keeffe, said there were plenty of options for local cane growers to explore.

"While making inputs is not going to be every farmers cup of tea, there are plenty of options out there and we are encouraging local growers to come along and learn more," he said.

"The Attard's have seen real cost-savings as well as a reduction in herbicides, pesticide and fertiliser application with better soil health and water quality outcomes.



"More and more we are seeing there are significant economic benefits to practices that are also more sound ecologically."

**Growers interested in attending the Field Day should RSVP by cob Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June to Reef Catchments phone (07) 4968 4200.**

**EVENT DETAILS**

**WHEN:** Wednesday June 24th | 8:30am - 4:00pm

**RSVP:** 07 4968 4200 or [info@reefcatchments.com](mailto:info@reefcatchments.com) by Friday 19th June

**COST:** This event is free for attending landholders

ENDS

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**IMAGE1:** From left John Attard, Kym Kruse and Michael Attard at the Eton trial site.



**IMAGE2:** Michael Attard with a spray rig modified for optimal application.

