

MEDIA RELEASE

New Reef funding will help growers shift to above industry standard

EMBARGOED MONDAY 28th NOVEMBER 2016

MACKAY AND WHITSUNDAYS | New Reef funding will assist eligible cane growers to enhance their farming operations to increase profitability, and just as significantly improve water quality and run-off into the Great Barrier Reef.

Over the next three years, \$4.4 million will be rolled out across the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac (MWI) region allowing more growers to prioritise and fast-track improved nutrient and herbicide management practices.

Reef Catchments will deliver the Australian Government Reef Trust 3 funding in the MWI Natural Resource Management (NRM) area, which extends from Clairview to the south to just below Bowen in the north.

“This funding supports cane growers to improve herbicide and nutrient management practices, with a focus on nitrogen use efficiencies and improved herbicide application,” said Reef Catchments sustainable agriculture coordinator Michael Boland.

The funding round will target 250 new growers.

“We are keen to work with growers who have not previously been involved in the Reef Programme,” Mr Boland said.

Funding provides cane farmers (per grower) with access to expert agronomic advice valued at \$6000 at no cost to the grower; as well as \$1500 for upgrades and the opportunity to access major grant funding ahead.

“Reef Trust 3 will assist the transition to above industry standard nutrient and herbicide practices in our region,” Mr Boland said.

CANEGROWERS Mackay Chairman Kevin Borg said the funding was a boon for those growers who were trying to fast-track best management practices.

“Because this programme aligns with our own industry's Smartcane BMP requirements, growers are able to quantify the link between environmental sustainability and the profitability of their businesses.

“We encourage all eligible growers to take advantage of this opportunity to use this funding for the implementation of practices that will streamline their operations and improve water quality in our waterways,” Mr Borg said.

MEDIA RELEASE

Mr Boland went on to say growers who undertook planning to advance toward improved nutrient and herbicide practice would then be well placed to apply for a major funding grant.

“This is a win-win for farm economics and for the Great Barrier Reef.”

In the first stage of the programme, growers will work with local farm extension officers from Mackay Area Productivity Service (MAPS), Farmacist, and Plane Creek Productivity Services Limited (PCPSL) to review farming practices and pinpoint where most effective change can be made.

“In this first stage, growers who become involved in the programme can also each access \$1500 of upgrades to nutrient or herbicide equipment or practices. This includes EM mapping, soil testing, leaf analysis, spray nozzles, spray tanks and modification of existing spray equipment,” Mr Boland said.

Funding is in line with ambitious Reef 2050 targets to reduce nutrients and herbicides leaving the farm, including nitrogen from fertiliser.

Participating growers must be Smartcane BMP registered and have completed their Smartcane BMP self-assessment, or be prepared to do so.

Interested growers are encouraged to inquire about the funding by contacting their local representative from MAPS, Farmacist, PCPSL or Reef Catchments. Smartcane BMP facilitators also are available to assist with BMP registration.

At this stage, growers who have participated in Reef Rescue 2 are not eligible to apply, as funding emphasis is on engaging new growers who have not received nutrient and herbicide planning support that was provided as part of Reef Rescue 2. Growers who were involved in Reef Rescue 1, but not in Reef Rescue 2, can still apply.

GROWER CONTACT | Matt Schembri

E: matt.schembri@reefcatchments.com Ph: 07 4968 4225 or M: 0437 344 851

ENDS

Reef Trust 3 is coordinated by Reef Catchments in the MWI region; funded by the Australian Government and delivered through the Reef Trust. The programme is delivered in partnership with CANEGROWERS Mackay, Mackay Area Productivity Services (MAPS), Farmacist and Plane Creek Productivity Services Limited (PCPSL).



IMAGE: Grower Michael Vella (right) and Andy Humphreys from MAPS with a hooded sprayer co-funded under the Australian Government Reef Programme. **Download image:**

http://reefcatchments.com.au/files/2016/11/MichaelVella_ReefProgramme.jpg

MEDIA CONTACT Jaime Newborn jaime.newborn@reefcatchments.com

07 4968 4200 or 0439 726 226

Please contact us direct for image or interview requests.