

## Nutrient Management and Data Recording

Mackay Area Productivity Services (MAPS), as part of the Mackay Whitsunday Water Quality Program (MWWQP), are helping growers to maximise profits and reduce inputs through improved nutrient management planning.

Nutrient management plans developed for specific farms allows growers to better understand their soils and growing conditions. By having this detailed knowledge, growers in conjunction with agronomic assistance from MAPS, can more effectively plan what, when and how to apply nutrients to their blocks to maximise yields, reduce inputs and reduce runoff entering local waterways.

Nutrient management starts from the ground up with soil testing and interpretation of those results by an agronomist. Growers have the opportunity to access this detailed soil analysis with MAPS via funding from the MWWQP. One grower who has taken advantage of the funding available is Albert De Boni, a generational cane grower from Devereaux Creek.

*"Our soil tests are what governs how much nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous and sulphur that we put on. We could be up for within excess of \$250,000 this year just for fertiliser alone."*

Through soil analysis it was determined that the pH of Albert's farm was lower than ideal to maximise nutrient uptake from applied fertilisers. As a result, with support and some financial assistance from the MWWQP, Albert and MAPS worked together to design and construct a liquid lime spreader that could accurately apply lime to the rows. This increased the pH, allowing less nitrogen fertiliser to be applied, and optimising the cane's ability to use that nitrogen.



The MAPS Projects are funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.



This project reduced the amount of overall nitrogen applied, thereby lowering costs, and moved away from blanket spreading of powdered lime, meaning smaller amounts of lime could be applied more accurately. The project is modelled to improve the quality of water running off Albert's farm into local waterways.

The financial and environmental benefits are connected. As Albert states, "The less you apply, the less chance you got of it getting into our river systems". Therefore, projects such as this one are reducing costs and improving environmental outcomes.

Access to funding to participate in programs such as the MWWQP is key for growers as it enables them to explore opportunities that might not be possible without the required support and funding assistance.

*"MAPS has been very, very helpful. If we can get funding to do a project, it sort of encourages us to have a go." - Albert De Boni*



If you would like to see what programs and assistance could be available to you, please contact Reef Catchments or visit their website [www.reefcatchments.com.au](http://www.reefcatchments.com.au)