

# Mackay-Whitsunday Extension Forum

February 2023

Thirty-two sugarcane extension and industry staff working across the Mackay-Whitsunday region came together to attend the Mackay-Whitsunday extension forum held in Walkerston. The forum provided a platform to bring together stakeholders to engage with regional projects, highlight achievements, share updates, and discuss lessons learnt.

Extension and industry members turned out to hear updates from seven water quality projects under the Mackay-Whitsunday Water Quality Program, new sugarcane paddock trials under the Queensland Government Paddock to Reef Program, a local SRA low-cost irrigation automation project and the Great Barrier Reef Foundations sugarcane innovation projects.

The forum presentations were split over four key focus areas including water quality trails and monitoring, irrigation and innovation, pesticides, and nutrients management and data recording platforms. Industry and extension staff highlighted challenges associated with the delivery of land management and the adoption of new practices and shared experiences on how best to support growers when providing extension support.

Many of the resourcing and legacy tools that have been developed and supported by Reef Trust Partnership and Great Barrier Reef Foundation were also highlighted throughout the forum and in presentations. Including, WTW Nitrogen Risk Insurance program developed to provide cover to farmers for risk of yield shortfalls from reducing Nitrogen Rates. Irrigation Rapid Assessment Tool (i-Rat) a web-based platform to assess the farm economics of different irrigation practices. CSIRO 1622 WhatIF application which assesses the crop performance and environmental impact from changing fertiliser application.

With an eye on the future, the Mackay Whitsunday Water Quality Program Growers Annual Growers Forum is scheduled to be held in April. It will provide an opportunity for the Mackay-Whitsunday cane growers to engage with regional projects.



*Pictured: Thirty-two sugarcane extension and industry staff during the Mackay-Whitsunday extension forum in Walkerston.*



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