



## ONE THIRD OF CANE COUNTRY NOW ACCREDITED

By Kate Gowdie

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Cane growers up and down the Queensland coast have embraced Smartcane BMP, with 1 in 3 hectares of cane land now accredited through third party certification. These growers are farming at or above industry standards for soil health and nutrient management, weeds, pest and disease management, and irrigation and drainage management. They are doing their bit to secure the industry's social license to operate, while also boosting their productivity and profitability. So, what are best management practices?

### SOIL HEALTH AND NUTRIENT

Soil Health and Nutrient Management best practice requires growers to have a soil map of their property and soil tests to be taken on fallow blocks to determine the nutrient requirements of the proceeding crop.

This is considered best practice because not only does it comply with best science (SIX EASY STEPS) and legislative requirements, it also delivers a range of benefits to the crop, the business, and the environment:

- Agronomic benefits - the crop gets the nutrients it actually requires at the times they are required.
- Economic benefits - money is not wasted on unnecessary inputs and/or investments are made in necessary inputs that will improve productivity and hence profitability.
- Environmental benefits - inputs that are targeted specifically for individual crops and soil types result in less wastage and less runoff.

This module also looks at soil health relating to fallow management and compaction control.

#### **Auditing requirements:**

*You must provide a soil map, soils test results and corresponding nutrient recommendations, nutrients application records including dates and rates, cultivation practices and mark-out strategies.*

### WEEDS, PEST AND DISEASE

Weeds, Pest and Disease Management sets BMP standards around the monitoring and control of unwanted plants, animals, insects and diseases that impact cane crops.

Weeds, pests and disease can compete with the crop for nutrients, contaminate the crop and the environment and may lead to significant economic losses. Controlling any impact makes economic, agronomic and environmental sense.

Best practice for the chemical control of weeds ensures chemical-use is targeted, necessary and applied under suitable conditions.

All industry standards adhere to legislative standards as a minimum, including requirements for record keeping, training and document control.

#### **Auditing requirements:**

*You must provide a weed management plan, chemical records, appropriate qualifications of persons using chemicals, and clean seed receipts.*

### IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE

Irrigation and Drainage Management also focusses on the three core values of productivity, profitability and sustainability.

Timing, amount and control of irrigation are all considered. Determining the soils water-holding capacity and the plants' available water allows the grower to schedule irrigation at the right time and apply only what is required, resulting in less run-off.

#### **Auditing requirements:**

*You must provide a drainage map and demonstrate how you manage water flow across the farm, as well as irrigation records (if applicable).*

Smartcane BMP has a team of facilitators available to assist growers through the process. Visit [smartcane.com.au](http://smartcane.com.au) or contact your local CANEGROWERS office for more information.

Smartcane BMP is funded through the Queensland State Government until 2022. ■

**GROWERS WHO FARM TO INDUSTRY STANDARD ARE PROVEN TO BE MORE PROFITABLE, PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE.**

**GROWERS ACCREDITED IN SMARTCANE BMP ARE OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED FOR DOING SO.**

Accreditation certifies that growers are farming sustainably - an increasing demand from mills, financial institutions, sugar buyers and end users.

