Sustainable agriculture: fast tracking adoption of innovative management practices in land-use industries in the Mackay Whitsunday region

Project summary

Proponent: Reef Catchments (Mackay Whitsunday Isaac) Ltd

Value: $600,000

Project duration: 1 October 2013 – 30 June 2016

Project description

The agricultural industry in the Mackay Whitsunday region is constantly responding to environmental, business and market challenges, while striving to improve productivity and the management of natural resources. The investment focus to date has been on the sugar cane industry. This project will engage the grazing, horticulture and forestry industries that occupy 60% of the region’s production area.

This project will improve sustainable resource use and agricultural productivity in the Mackay Whitsunday region. This will be achieved by promoting and demonstrating aspirational or innovative practices appropriate to the grazing, horticultural and forestry industries. The project will engage existing industry extension services and land managers to achieve and leverage on-ground outcomes through the application of innovative practices.

The development of this project by Reef Catchments has included discussions and feedback from representatives of primary industry groups in the Mackay Whitsunday region. Grazing, horticultural and forestry regional working groups will increase engagement and participation by regional communities and groups including professional farming system groups, peak industry organisations, Landcare and community groups, and individuals in natural resource management activities.

The project will include the following activities:

- coordinate information and key messages for the region about farm productivity and demonstrate linkages to natural resource management
- provide targeted, practical extension and support to landholders in the grazing, horticultural and forestry industries
- produce locally relevant information on sustainable farming practices
• manage a series of engagement / extension activities (e.g. workshops, farm walks, one-on-one, training activities) that will be integrated with existing extension initiatives, where possible, to encourage adoption of practical and cost-effective practices that support sustainable land management.

**Project outcomes**

**Long-term outcomes (5-10 years)**

• The preparedness and resilience of Mackay Whitsunday communities (including professional farming system groups, peak industry organisations, Landcare, community groups and individuals) is improved.
• The quality and health of waterways, wetlands and the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) lagoon is improved and protected.
• The condition, physical stability and resilience of the natural resource base for agriculture is protected and improved to secure and increase resource availability and productivity.
• Landscapes are managed in a manner that maintains and improves the resilience of strategic primary producing to enhance agricultural productivity.
• Mackay Whitsunday communities (including professional farming system groups, peak industry organisations, Landcare, community groups and individuals) value and can engage more effectively in addressing natural resource management issues, particularly those that affect water quality in the GBR Lagoon, such as pollutant runoff from agricultural land.

**Intermediate outcomes (3-5 years)**

• Pollutant loads entering waterways and reaching the GBR Lagoon are reduced.
• Soil health, fertility and ground cover in the Mackay Whitsunday region are increased.
• The threat of erosion in the Mackay Whitsunday region is reduced and the resilience of land increased.
• Mackay Whitsunday has improved management for soil fertility and health.
• Mackay Whitsunday has improved management for water quality.
• Through participation in the three industry-specific Regional Working Groups and the activities organised under this program (innovation forums, demonstration sites, technical workshops, field days etc.) regional communities and groups (including professional farming system groups, peak industry organisations, Landcare, community groups and individuals) will have the skills, knowledge and capacity to participate and engage in natural resource management.

**Further information**

For further information on the ‘Sustainable agriculture: fast tracking adoption of innovative management practices in land-use industries in the Mackay Whitsunday region’ project, please contact [Reef Catchments (Mackay Whitsunday Isaac) Ltd](mailto:info@reefcatchments.com.au).
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