

SENATE RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Identification of leading practices in ensuring evidence-based regulation of farm practices that impact water quality outcomes in the Great Barrier Reef

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION 1: PAGE 46

Senator GREEN : Okay. I just wanted to make that clear. In terms of take-up rates, do you want to take that on notice? I would like some figures, if that's okay?

CropLife Australia members contribute millions to the stewardship of their products every year, to ensure they are being used responsibly and safely, that product containers are recycled and to avoid and minimise any off-target impacts on environments such as the Great Barrier Reef.

CropLife's Stewardship First suite of initiatives and programs include our resistance management strategies, the Pollinator Protection Initiative (which includes the award-winning BeeConnected app and the treated seeds stewardship program), and initiatives aimed at minimising spray drift (including SprayBest and MyAgCHEMUSE). In addition, CropLife's wholly owned subsidiary training organisation, Agsafe, facilitates waste management recycling collection programs, **drumMUSTER** and ChemClear, for both empty product containers and obsolete or unwanted chemicals. Agsafe has worked closely with the Queensland Government during natural disasters such as flooding, to minimise the impact these natural disasters have on the Reef.

CropLife and our members have a long history of working with growers, advisors, distributors and various farmer groups to deliver both training programs and formal stewardship initiatives.

For example, Bayer and Nufarm have been collaborating with Sugar Research Australia and the Queensland Government to provide formal training programs for growers using crop protection products in the Reef catchment areas. Between 2016 and 2019, this collaboration significantly improved pesticide outcomes by running formal, targeted pesticide application training programs for growers in the wet tropics. Their current collaborative program, which began in 2020, has delivered training to more than 120 farm advisors, who in turn extend that training to growers. The recently released training video has been viewed more than 250 times. To supplement this training, Bayer and Nufarm have produced and distributed more than 900 'Depth Gauges' to farmers. Monitoring of river water levels for imidacloprid by QDES has shown a steady improvement over the previous three years.

Through their suSCon Applicator Excellence Program, Nufarm have trained approximately 400 pesticide applicators and advisors to date. In 2021, Nufarm are planning on conducting refresher training.

In addition, Adama have developed the innovative ReefAware app, which is a decision-making tool to support cane growers and advisors to maximise the benefits and safe use of their products, while minimising runoff and environmental impacts to the Reef and neighboring waterbodies. The app takes into account current and short-term weather conditions, site soil type and topography; utilising soil and slope data from the Australian Soil Resource Information System, waterbody data from the Qld Spatial Catalogue and BoM weather data. The app models the risk of runoff for Adama's range of sugarcane crop protection products, forecasting and mapping when and where they are safe to apply.

From 2010 to 2020, Grazing BMP (best management practice) was an industry-led, voluntary self-assessment tool enabling beef cattle graziers to benchmark and continuously improve their practices against industry-developed standards and guidelines.

Grazing BMP was managed through an alliance between AgForce, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and Fitzroy Basin Association. BMP modules could be directly accessed online by beef cattle producers or facilitated by industry, government, natural resource management bodies and consultants.

Within the six Reef catchments extending from Eastern Cape York to the Burnett-Mary Catchment, there are 5285 commercial beef cattle grazing enterprises (*Figure 1*).

Over an eight-year period from 2010 to 2018¹:-

- 1473 grazing enterprises (28 per cent) had completed at least one of the five Grazing BMP modules.
- These 1473 enterprises managed 13, 404 407 hectares which is 47 per cent of the entire Reef grazing area of 28.4 million hectares.
- At least 820 enterprises (15.5 per cent) had completed all five modules.

The annual ReefPlan report card 2017 and 2018² tracks progress towards the ReefPlan 2050 target of 90 per cent of agricultural land managed under best practice. The 2017-18 report card indicates only 35.8 per cent³ of grazing area or 11.2million ha is managed under best practice. This value reflects producer engagement with Reef government grants, rather than an overall report of adoption by the majority of beef producers. This is confirmed by reading the sub-report on Agricultural Land Management Practice Adoption⁴ which states only management practice results are from producers directly involved in Reef grants administered through Regional Natural Resource Management groups, RCS Consulting Project Pioneer and government agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries DAF and Department of Environment and Science DES. The only other practice reporting comes from producers engaging one-on-one with DAF extension staff. The Report Card results state *"other programs engaging landholders, often on a larger scale, are not included in the Report Card"*. Voluntary best practice adoption is not reported from producers implementing best practice at their own expense, whether they are voluntarily engaged within the Grazing BMP program or not.

¹ AgForce Queensland Farmers, 2018. Grazing BMP Annual Review 2017-18
<https://agforceqld.org.au/intranet/file.php?id=5730>

² ReefPlan Report Card 2017 and 2018 <https://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/tracking-progress/reef-report-card/2017-2018>

³ 2017-2018 Reef Report Card – Progress towards grazing land management target. Page 9
https://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/82901/report-card-2017-2018-results-agricultural-mpa.pdf

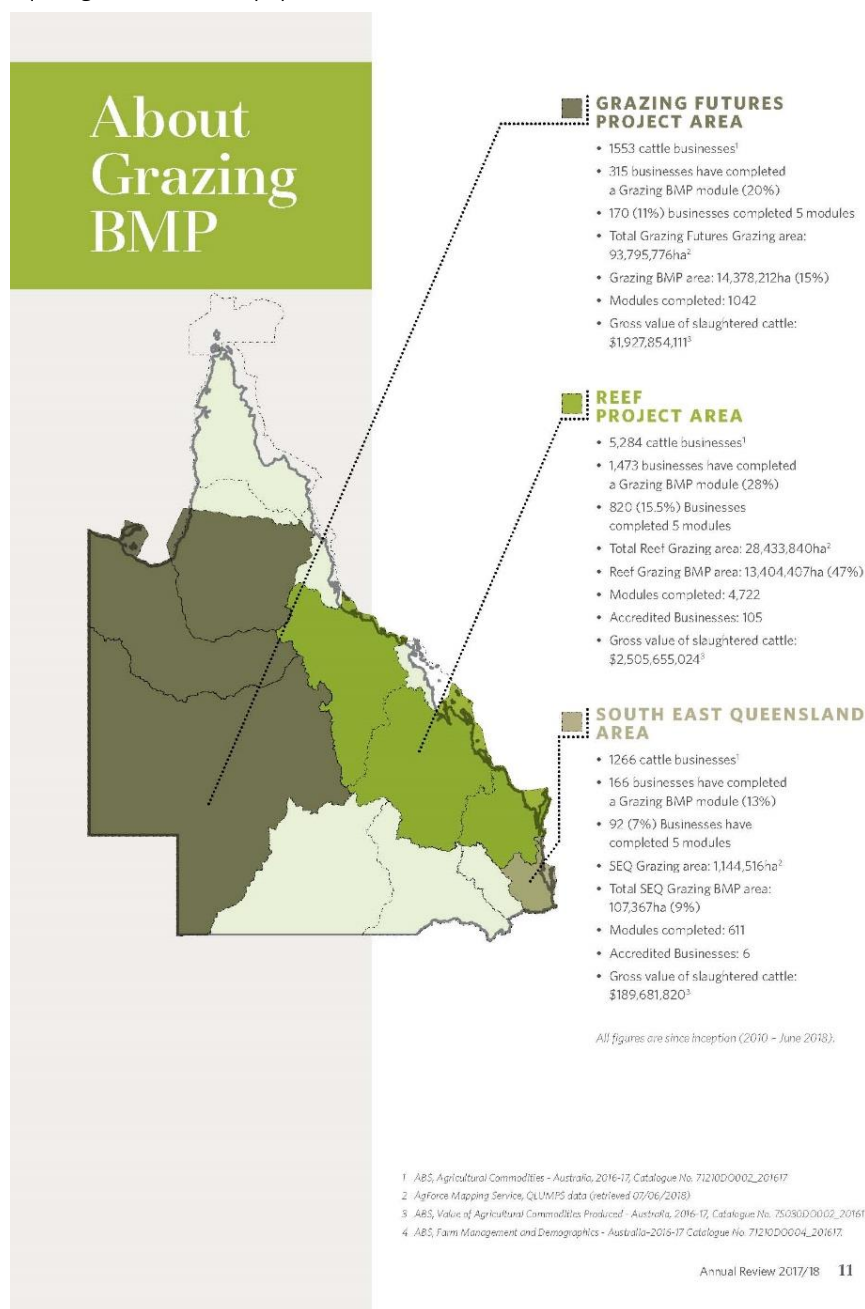
⁴ ReefPlan Agricultural Management Practice Results 2017and 2018 (page 5)
https://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/82901/report-card-2017-2018-results-agricultural-mpa.pdf

A Grazing BMP sub-report⁵ was generated in 2017 to assess adoption levels across seven standards relevant to reducing risks from fodder weeds and reducing weed seed spread. The results clearly show at least 85 per cent of producers are at best practice or above best practice for these seven standards.

From the 155 Grazing BMP standards, seven (7) standards are relevant to weed management and weed seed risk from fodder. This includes correct weed identification, using herbicides as per label directions, record-keeping and adhering to industry quality assurance programs such as Livestock Production Assurance.

Figure 1: Grazing BMP adoption rates per project area from 2010 to 2018

Source: AgForce Queensland Farmers, 2018. Grazing BMP Annual Review 2017-18
<https://agforceqld.org.au/intranet/file.php?id=5730>



⁵ AgForce Queensland, 2017. Grazing BMP Fodder Weed Risk Biosecurity Report. 7 November 2017. Internal report to AgForce.



Since 2014, Smartcane BMP has been working with cane farmers across Queensland to record and verify their practice improvements. Over 70 per cent of Qld cane is managed by growers involved in Smartcane BMP program. Thirty-five per cent of Qld cane area is managed by accredited growers via a 3rd party audit process and over 100,000 ha of practice improvements have been seen in just the last two years by participating growers.

BMP includes eight modules that cover the many aspects of farming and business management. The BMP can be undertaken individually, or farmers can go through with the help of a local BMP facilitator. The BMP facilitators specialise in cane farming in the districts they work in⁶.

⁶ Smartcane BMP <https://smartcane.com.au/case-studies/>

QUESTION 2: PAGE 48

Senator KIM CARR : Perhaps you'd like to take it on notice : what is the attitude of your member companies to the reduction in Commonwealth support for research and development for your member companies?

The plant science industry globally invests tens of billions of dollars annually in research and development. We urge all governments to have R&D arrangements that encourage and facilitate research and development, which will enable our members to continue to deliver new innovations that benefit the farming sector, allowing farmers to be more productive, profitable and environmentally sustainable.

The specific matter raised is not one that CropLife or our members have specifically assessed at this time and therefore, we cannot provide specific commentary in relation thereto. However, we may through the appropriate channels seek to make a contribution at a later date if such an opportunity avails itself and after proper consideration has been given to the policy to which reference is made.

We do note, however, that outstanding undertakings from successive governments about addressing the denial of commercial return and loss of value of up to three or more years for patents for crop protection innovations due to a mandatory regulatory system is a matter that is yet to be properly addressed and rectified. This is a significant barrier to encouraging R&D in our industry and one we urge be addressed as a matter of urgency.