

# REEF RESCUE

2012

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Michael Deguara

## Improved Farming System using Controlled Traffic and Rotational Legume Fallows

**Reef Rescue has helped Michael Deguara make big changes on his farm including using rotational legume fallow crops as part of a controlled traffic system with GPS. With the funding, Michael was able to modify existing equipment and purchase some new equipment to make implementing his**

Michael has a history of trialling new management practices on his farm. In 2000 he trialled legume fallows and then in 2005 started to implement some wider row spacings to look at the benefits of controlled traffic.

After a few years Michael could see the benefits of combining these practices on his farm and in 2009 used Reef Rescue to help purchase a legume planter and to modify his equipment such as his spray rigs and grubber to match his 1.83m row spacings.

Michael explained that “legume fallows have made a huge impact on soil health on my farm and I have seen the subsequent productivity benefits.

“It also provides good ground cover during the wet season and provides the majority of nitrogen to the following plant cane crop. Last year was the first time since 2000 that Michael was unable to establish legumes due to the extreme rainfall in late 2010 and early 2011.

Michael has now converted his whole farm to the new system and in 2012 received Reef Rescue funding to get GPS on two tractors, a zonal rotary hoe and modify his planter to match the row spacing he has selected.

Michael said “I wanted to establish wide rows on the farm to test how it works and now want to use GPS to maintain permanent traffic zones and adopt zonal tillage operations.”



About the farm...

Michael is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation farmer and the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation to farm his current 150 ha farm located at Farleigh, around 10 km North West of Mackay. His family moved to the farm in the 1950's and Michael has grown sugarcane there since 1990.

The farm is close to the Farleigh Mill and is bordered by the Bruce Highway as you drive north. While the property does not incorporate or border a waterway, runoff drains into Amhurst Creek which is part of the Reliance Creek sub-catchment.



This project is supported by Reef Catchments through funding from the Australian Government's 'Caring for our Country' program.



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He is currently testing to find the most suitable cultivation operations or methods to go from last ratoon into a legume fallow and then back into plant cane for the soil types on his farm. Michael said, "I was always keen to move to my new system but without Reef Rescue this would have taken much longer than it has."

As well as improving his soil management, Michael has been changing some of his other management practices on farm. He has attended many training programs including FEAT, 6 Easy Steps and

Weed Management courses and is incorporating what he has learned back on the farm.

In 2011 he received Reef Rescue support for the purchase of a 3-row sub-surface granular stool splitter fertiliser box to be able to apply his determined nutrient rates accurately with placement under the ground.

Michael explained "I also modified my spray equipment to improve my application effectiveness and timing because you do need better weed management in the wider rows and I don't want to have to keep coming back to control vines."

***"I was always keen to move to my new system but without Reef Rescue this would have taken much longer than it has"***



Three row sub-surface fertiliser applicator

## OUTCOMES



Reduced risk of chemical losses with accurate and effective applications



Improvements in soil health from rotational legume fallows helping crop productivity



Reduced risk of sediment losses from increased ground cover during wet season

### Reef Catchments

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body who oversees the Reef Rescue program in the Mackay Whitsunday region for the federal government.

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