

REEF RESCUE

2011

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Tibby Dixon

IMPROVED INTER-ROW MANAGEMENT

REEF RESCUE HELPED TIBBY DIXON IMPLEMENT IMPROVED INTER-ROW MANAGEMENT ON HIS LYCHEE FARM. WITH THE FUNDING, TIBBY WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN EXCELLENT GROUND COVER BETWEEN HIS LYCHEE ROWS AND UTILISE THE RESIDUE AS MULCH AND ORGANIC MATTER UNDER THE TREES.

In 2010, Tibby applied for Reef Rescue funding to purchase a zero turn 35hp side throwing mulch mower to take advantage of the mulch left behind by directing it under the lychee trees. Tibby says that the main reason for doing this was to maintain a good ground cover on the inter-row to reduce the risk of any soil erosion and the subsequent weed control under the trees will reduce the reliance on herbicides. The mulching under the trees will also improve soil health and structure by increasing organic matter and the improved water retention, which will decrease the need for irrigation applications. Tibby added that it will allow us to mow in all weather conditions without causing impact to our inter-rows which reduces the potential of erosion and sediment runoff.

For lychees, there are quite a few stages in the production process before being able to successfully harvest a commercial crop. In Year one, the establishment stage involves preparing the ground for planting by ripping and then making sure there is phosphorous available for good root development. Tibby also says weed control is very important at this stage and because of the risk of chemicals impacting on the young trees; sugar cane mulch is used and works very well over the first few years. Varieties that are used on the farm include Taiso (first commercial varieties into Australia), B3 (No.1 at present) and some new varieties from China.

By Year three some varieties may produce, but it is more likely to be Year five before any fruit can be seen



About the farm...

Tibby Dixon owns and manages a Lychee farm close to Campwin and Sarina Beaches around 30 km South-East from Mackay. The estuary section of Plane Creek is not too far away from the 50 ha property, with around 20ha under Lychee production.

Tibby says that when they first moved to the property 32 years ago it was originally a cane farm and in 1979, the first 265 trees were planted on 9m x 9m spacings. In 2011, Tibby explained how they have completely changed their planting design and they now use 8m x 2m spacings and have around 6500 trees. This means smaller trees, but they are easier and safer to harvest.



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



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and maybe even Year seven before being able to get enough for a commercial harvest. Tibby says that it is also very season dependant and for a good crop you need cold, dry weather during the flowering period. With his new planting design of 8m x 2m, trees are on average around 2m tall and so he doesn't need ladders or cherry pickers to get the crop off. During the production stage, Tibby utilises leaf and soil analysis to determine nutrient requirements and uses fertigation to match what the crop needs at specific time such as before flowering or after fruit set.

Reef Rescue has helped Tibby implement a very beneficial activity on his farm. He says that he was

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always very keen to look at doing it but the cost was a barrier and he would not have been able to do it for example if he could only get 20% funding. Tibby says that as a keen fisherman he is very interested in what other reef users and land uses are doing as part of the solution. Down the track he is keen to look at improving his drainage system to maximize the benefit of his existing storm water structures.

Outcomes

- Reduced risk of sediment losses from maintaining a good inter-row ground cover
- Reduced risk of chemical losses by reducing herbicide applications



OUTCOMES



Reduced risk of sediment losses



Reduced risk of chemical losses by reducing herbicide applications



Improved soil health improving infiltration and water retention

Reef Catchments

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

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