



# CASE STUDY

Glen & Mandy Schmidtke have sought a challenge late into their career, with a 10 year lease on a 110 ha cane farm in the Plane Creek catchment, south of Mackay. Today, they have completed 2 years managing this farm and see the 8 years ahead as an opportunity.

Glen has a cane farming family history, his grandfather, father and brother have all been cane farmers. Glen's father received an environmental award many years ago for installing a water catchment on their land. The idea was for additional irrigation capacity, however, the initiative also slowed water leaving the farm trapping sediments, fertiliser and chemicals.

Their combined previous careers have given Glen & Mandy skill sets to track their progress and inputs for maximum productivity and profit. The electronic spread sheets and daily record keeping allow them to have real time data for decision making. Mandy enjoys the title of Farm Manager and doesn't object to getting out into the field to pick rocks. She takes a keen interest in soil microbes in her large vegie patch and luscious gardens.

Glen contacted Plane Creek Productivity Services Limited (PCPSL) to initiate access to the Reef Trust 3 Programme (RT3).

Along with the useful benchmarking process, the main benefit they have taken from the programme so far is the ability to ask questions with access to agronomic advice from PCPSL. The Schmidtke's also received a major grant which assisted in the upgrading of their spray rig. A folding boom assembly was fitted to the spray rig plus a controller unit to allow sections of the boom to be turned on/off. The upgraded spray rig was part of the Schmidtke's progression toward B Class herbicide management practices, specifically zonal directed spraying of residuals so as to reduce the quantities of residuals applied to cane paddocks.

With regard to nutrition the RT3 programme asks growers to consider applying fertiliser more in line with the crop needs, aiming to lower the risk of excess nutrient losses into the environment. There is a lot of motivation to use variable fertiliser rates. Glen says, "Fertiliser is expensive, I can't see why you'd put more on than you would need".

Water logging is an issue in some of their blocks. Addressing all aspects of a paddock's production constraints is a strong theme in the latest approaches to achieving water quality improvements as discussed in the RT3 programme.

Glen notes timing is every thing in farming, there are economies of scale available in sharing equipment with other farmers, however, not if you don't have access to the equipment at the right time. For example, when its time to spray a weed out, a day or two could be late.

Glen says innovation brings young people into the industry, "If you don't change, you die. The next 10-15 years in farming is set to be very interesting."

## FOCUS ON



- ▶ Productivity through precision application and timing of nutrition and herbicides
- ▶ Accurate and up to date record keeping for farm management and decision making

## KEY POINTS



- ▶ Reducing residual herbicide use through controlled spray unit and zonal directed spraying.



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