



CASE STUDY

Ian and Tanya Baillie have owned their 85 ha cane farm located in Sarina for 11 years and are soon to purchase an adjacent additional 110 ha from a retiring family member. Ian comes from a long line of cane farmers and who have been farming in the region for over 70 years, assisted by the scheme provided by the government to returned soldiers. Tanya immediate family background is grasing however has cane farming origins and ancestry. Their 13 year old son is also heavily involved in the operations. Their biggest challenge is the split locations of their farm (separated by the Bruce Highway) and differing soil types across the farms, however, Tanya says, "To me a challenge is something to get through."

Having successfully completed the Reef Rescue 1 programme in (2008 – 2013), the Baillie's joined the Reef Trust 3 programme with the intention to purchase a stool splitter fertiliser applicator. Through this process they have been engaged with PCPSL (contracted by Reef Catchments to provide agronomic services in RT3) and completed the ABCD farm benching marking survey. The Baillie's were interested to find out that just using the 6 Easy Steps with District Yield Potential as they had been doing was conventional or C class practice. RT3 showed the Baillie's that the progression to the improved B Class practice would involve consideration of the yield potential of the paddocks, taking into account the age of the crop, soil conditions and the timing of the harvest. The benchmarking process has proved important in clarifying what practices sit

"Sustaining the environment is important, if you don't you wont have a future."
"The kids get out in the waterways for recreation and our cows are tested for export so the health of our waterways is important to our business as well as our environment."

under which category and where to aim in the future.

The Baillie's previous nutrition practice was to engage contractors to apply liquid fertiliser on the surface of the trash blanket. The Baillie's have decided to apply fertiliser themselves and as such have moved to sub-surface granular fertiliser applied via a stool splitter arrangement. The Reef Trust 3 Programme (RT3) was able to assist with the purchase of a three row, double disc opener, stool splitter type fertiliser applicator.

Interestingly the Baillie's also elected to adopt the use of slow release type fertilisers. This decision resulted from the Baillie's own research. "We don't really try to do what everyone else is doing. I read all industry newsletters and magazines from multiple sectors and follow up research online. You have to keep on top of everything, it's easier to keep up with research rather than try to catch up later." RT3 staff in discussions with Tanya indicated that use of such slow release fertilisers was A Class practice in the current ABCD framework. A Class applies to new or innovative practices which have been adopted by growers but which require further validation to determine or fully quantify environmental and economic benefits. The RT3 funding is linked to progression toward A or B Class practices. The Baillie's RT3 funding assistance was used to purchase a stool splitter to progress toward B Class nutrient management, 6 Easy Steps plus yield potential considerations. The Baillie's elected to take the next step and advance to A Class through the use of the slow release fertilisers. This is both commendable and brave as the industry through Canegrowers is presently running an extensive project aimed a quantifying the benefits of the slow release fertilisers.

Typically their herbicide practice is to blanket spray of a residual herbicide after harvest. Then on taller cane, a high-rise tractor is used to apply a mix of knockdown and residual herbicides. This practice suits their farming operation, whilst not eliminating

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Use of slow release fertilisers
- ▶ On path to minimise use of residual herbicides



FOCUS ON

▶ Working toward improvements in nutrient and herbicide practices.




PH (07) 4968 4200
E info@reefcatchments.com
www.reefcatchments.com