



“The plan is to address BMP and Bonsucro accreditation. RT3 will be a start in that process.”

CASE STUDY

James Bugeja owns and operates a 112 ha cane farm in the Wallingford area approximately 25 km west of Mackay. He grows around 11,000 t on a fully irrigated farm which has 50% heavy cracking clays and 50% sandy/loam/gravel soil.

James is a third generation farmer. 20 of his 43 years have been on the present farm, 12 years on a dryland farm at Habana and the first 11 years on the family home farm at Palmyra. James has converted his farm to 1.8 m row spacing with controlled traffic via GPS control of the farm machinery.

The heavy black clay soil is challenging to farm, as it is very difficult to turn into a fine tilth, gets very adhesive when wet, and can dry out unexpectedly. James has successfully adapted minimum tillage practice to suit this soil. Supplementary income is obtained from contract planting. James has signed onto Smartcane BMP and has commenced working toward accreditation. James engaged in the Reef Rescue 1 Programme (2008 – 2013), obtaining financial assistance toward the GPS and self-steer units which are currently well utilised in his farming operation.

James describes himself as a grower keenly interested in developments in management practices within the industry. James is always prepared to consider new practices and learn from others who have similar farm conditions as himself as to how best to implement the new practices.

James joined the Reef Trust 3 (RT3) Programme in early 2017, electing to engage Farmacist to provide agronomic services. Since joining, Farmacist have benchmarked James’s farming operation and commenced examining A and B class nutrient and herbicide practices, with a view to adopting improved practices which fit in with his farming operation. James also attended a RT3 field day showcasing innovative trial sites run under Project Catalyst. The innovations included trials planting mixed cane varieties to overcome production constraints caused by sodic soil, trials comparing nutrient uptake and run off between applying low rates of mud sub-surface vs surface vs no mud application, and crop growth trials using Biosoils. James also attended a RT3 Workshop on Yield Mapping. This workshop showed farmers how Yield Mapping fits into A Class management practice and Yield Mapping its role as a part of a suite of tools in understanding a farm’s production constraints.

KEY POINTS



- ▶ Adoption of practices to suit the farmer’s farming operation and conditions.
- ▶ Importance of being aware of on-going developments in nutrition and herbicide management practices.

FOCUS ON



- ▶ Gain knowledge on industry best practice in nutrient and herbicide use.



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