

Burdekin N trial fertiliser application.



RP20 – How one trial has changed a mindset

Collaborators in the RP20 project in the Burdekin speak in this article about the success of the project.
By Andrea Evers.

The RP20 project began with one goal in mind – to validate the SIX EASY STEPS method for calculating the amount of Nitrogen needed to grow a crop of cane across the major soil types in the Burdekin.

The project has been successful in delivering on this goal and has achieved a number of additional, unexpected outcomes as well.

The 23 grower collaborators of the project have reported benefits that they didn't expect when they first agreed to take part in the project.

"This project has changed me as a farmer. Before RP20, N losses didn't cross my mind. I just grew cane. I now have a better understanding of the entire farm management process and have learned

how to identify losses and how to fix them," reported Eric Barbagallo.

A similar sentiment is expressed by the majority of collaborators involved in the project. These growers have shifted their thinking from 'if I apply enough Nitrogen and water, the crop will grow', to focussing on all areas of farm management.

By taking all factors into account, the growers manage all variables in order to maximise output and profit.

Steve Pilla, a collaborator since 2012, says: "If the crop is well managed, N will not make the difference. I now focus on what the conditions are that I can't do anything about and then suit the management style to get the best result possible."

The final report for the Burdekin Nitrogen Trials, with data covering five years across all major soil types and full crop cycles, will be presented at a technical forum in Townsville on 17th May. A full economic analysis will also be presented.

Grower updates will be held in Brandon, Home Hill and Clare on the 23rd and 24th May.

More details on these events will also be available on the SRA website www.sugarresearch.com.au

Above (inset): SRA Researcher Julian Connellan working on the trials.