



# Making your life easier with nutrient management plans

**"Always plan ahead.  
It wasn't raining when  
Noah built the ark."**

**RICHARD CUSHING**

Planning is a large part of successful farm management. For growers to achieve the best results on their farm under a range of conditions and circumstances, planning is a necessity. In some cases, planning involves going through a formal process and in other cases it is an informal process that is not always documented.

One of these formal processes is the whole farm nutrient management planning process. These whole farm nutrient management plans assist with maximising profitability and complying with regulations by rationalising fertiliser recommendations to make applications more practical.

Factors that influence nutrient management:

APPLICATION OF MILL  
BY-PRODUCTS

AVAILABLE  
EQUIPMENT

WEED AND PEST  
MANAGEMENT

POSITION IN THE  
LANDSCAPE

WEATHER / CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

NUTRITIONAL  
REQUIREMENTS

CROP CLASS

PREVIOUS  
BLOCK  
HISTORY

SPECIES OF COVER  
CROP GROWN

SOIL TYPE

SOIL TEST RESULTS

COVER CROP  
DURATION

SOIL  
AMELIORANTS  
APPLIED

HARVESTING/  
RATOONING DATE



Given there are so many factors that can influence individual block recommendations, one function of the whole farm nutrient management plan is to rationalise and finetune recommendations to a practical number of blends and rates across the farm incorporating many of the factors that influence nutrient management.

Farmacist, through the EHP funded project RP161, is working with over 160 Burdekin growers to develop their whole farm nutrient management plans. ■

*(Over Page) Burdekin grower and RP161 participant, Richelle Kelly discussing nutrient management plans with Alice Warner from Farmacist. (Above Left) Heidi Hatch (Farmacist) is going through nutrient management plans with RP161 grower, Stephen Fabbro. (Above Top Right) Jayson Dowie and Heidi Hatch from Farmacist on farm during fertiliser application. (Above Bottom Right) Evan Shannon from Farmacist with Richard Kelly on his farm.*

#### The RP161 whole farm nutrient management planning process includes:

- ① Benchmarking current nutrient practice spatially.
- ② Collecting and spatially positioning all relevant soil test data to allow for site specific nutrient requirements across the farm.
- ③ Conducting a full farm nutrient plan considering varieties, crop classes, soil types, soil chemical analysis, limitations and previous block history (mud, legumes and ameliorants). Farmacist then develops a block by block plan in accordance with the industry accepted SIX EASY STEPS program providing what fertiliser blend to use, what rate, when to apply, and product placement. This data is then uploaded into a free spatial program such as google earth for their records.
- ④ Assisting the grower with a fertiliser box calibration to ensure the correct amount of fertiliser is actually being applied.
- ⑤ Farm visits are conducted to ensure all other factors that lead to efficient N use are under control (irrigations, pests and weeds etc.) As full farm management is required in making a nutrient plan work.
- ⑥ Collect and spatially map nutrient application data in accordance with reef regulations.

*All of this data is provided to growers in electronic and hardcopy to satisfy compliance records.*

**For more information about RP161 or how you can become involved, please contact the Farmacist Burdekin office on (07) 4782 2300.**

**Watch out for the revised SRA Australian Sugarcane Nutrition Manual, which will be available within the next couple of months.**