By the numbers and Proserpine Young Farmers learning together

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A group of young people involved in the agriculture industry near Proserpine have come together to form Proserpine Young Farmers (PYF). The group aims to provide a channel for under 40s involved and interested in agriculture to come together to share, learn and connect.

The group has been successful in obtaining funding through the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Enhanced Extension Coordination in the GBR Project.

Through this funding, the group is planning a variety of farm tours to learn about a range of practices. We want to see how others tackle issues, come up with solutions and improve their businesses, both profitability and sustainability. This includes several tours to local farms, one tour to the Burdekin in December 2019 with a focus on automated irrigation, and one tour to the Mackay region in Autumn 2020 focusing on fallow management. We also have a range of other activities in the pipeline including pricing and marketing workshops with Wilmar Sugar, and business and succession planning workshops.

Recently the group visited PYF member, Justin Blair’s, farm. This farm is BMP accredited, growing cane on 1.8m beds with dual rows. We looked at the sprayer which Justin has been using to trial switching nozzles on/off, to allow him to band spray and blanket spray. We also viewed his bed former, wavy discs, and fertiliser box which he has installed cameras on to allow him to view the inside of the box from the tractor, and Stool Zippas to help close the slot and prevent fertiliser loss.

Justin also has a range of other things happening on the farm, including having an Enviroscan capacitance probe and tensiometer installed by local productivity services, Sugar Services Proserpine, to help learn more about irrigation requirements and soil moisture.

SRA, as part of the Pathways to Water Quality Improvement in the Myrtle Creek Sub-catchment project, has just installed water quality samplers in one of Justin’s paddocks. Justin has applied Bobcat i-MAXX herbicide as a band spray on part of the paddock and as a blanket spray on the other part to see the difference in water quality run-off during the coming wet season.

The Blair family is also diversifying and have a native Australian fingerlime business, Myrtlevale Fingerlimes. We were lucky enough to taste test the fingerlimes as we learnt about the process they have gone through, including trialling several varieties.