2019

Next generation sets the pace of sustainable management

Brad Pfeffer
Sugar Research Australia Limited

https://hdl.handle.net/11079/18040
Downloaded from Sugar Research Australia Ltd eLibrary
NEXT GENERATION SETS THE PACE OF SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

YOUNG OR OLD, EVERYONE PITCHES IN AT PACE FARMING IN THE HERBERT, WITH THE FAMILY OPERATION CONTINUING TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE THEIR SUSTAINABILITY AND PROFITABILITY. BY BRAD PFEFFER

I t’s a family operation at Pace Farming near Bambaroo at the Southern end of the Herbert district.

Running a large-scale business, they grow cane over about 900 hectares, also grow watermelons and pumpkins across part of their fallow, grow legume manure crops for the remainder of their fallows, and also run a significant pineapple farm at Rollingstone. This all means the work rarely stops, and everyone is always pitching in.

This was the right time when CaneConnection visited in August this year. The family was in the thick of planting, with fourth generation growers Rebekah and Briannan busy fixing a busted hydraulic hose so they could finish the job.

Their father Allan (third generation) was also busy in the shed, cousin Jeffrey (fourth generation) was in the paddock on the rotary hoe, and grandfather Roy (fifth generation) was picking pineapples.

They have begun a zonal till system for mill mud and ash. By using a zonal applicator, it helps reduce transport costs from the mill and gives them access to a range of modern farming system and technology.

As the project’s main research focus is on nutrients, they have been given comprehensive information on soil tests and EM mapping, all linked back to Google Earth, and an easy to follow nutrient management plan, along with an array of other useful information to help improve productivity and sustainability.

“I enjoy the education I’m receiving through the project and having Shannon (O’Brien) from HCPSL step us through the technology and information,” Briannan said. “We’ve had the privilege of learning from our grandfather, and father, and now technology is changing quickly and we are seeing a bit of everything.”

Through their involvement in this project, they are looking forward to refining their nutrient management across the farm and seeing the effect upon their productivity and profitability.

Their improvement to nutrient management follows the adoption of a range of modern farming system and innovative practices in recent years, including long-time use of controlled traffic, legume fallows, and reduced tillage.

They have had the privilege of learning from decades of experience through this project and having Shannon O’Brien said the Pace family had a strong history of soil testing, but the project was bringing all the information together in a format that they could use both in a hard-copy book and the Google Earth data that can be looked at from their phone, anywhere on the farm.

“It’s a really nice step into the world of precision agriculture,” Shannon said.

For more information contact:
HCPSL: 07 4776 5660
Farmacist Mackay: 07 4959 7075
Farmacist Burdekin: 07 4782 2300

Shannon O’Brien said the Pace family had a strong history of soil testing, but the project was bringing all the information together in a format that they could use both in a hard-copy book and the Google Earth data that can be looked at from their phone, anywhere on the farm.

“As we’ve found with the Pace family, we can help identify those factors, looking at soil maps, EM mapping, to get the best outcome.

“An example is that growers may have traditionally taken soil samples from their poorer growing patches of the paddock. It is human nature to want to fix the poorer performing areas.

“But we want to make sure we continue to do things right where the cane is going well, so it can continue making money, which means sampling from the high performing areas too.

“The project takes a step back and looks at the whole picture, rather than just one factor like nitrogen.”

Shannon O’Brien said the Pace family had a strong history of soil testing, but the project was bringing all the information together in a format that they could use both in a hard-copy book and the Google Earth data that can be looked at from their phone, anywhere on the farm.

“It’s a really nice step into the world of precision agriculture,” Shannon said.

For more information contact:
HCPSL: 07 4776 5660
Farmacist Mackay: 07 4959 7075
Farmacist Burdekin: 07 4782 2300