



# A ONE-STOP GUIDE TO WHOLE-FARM NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

THROUGH THE HELP OF THE RP161 PROJECT AND HERBERT CANE PRODUCTIVITY SERVICES LIMITED, DARYL LARSEN IS SEEING BENEFITS TO HIS FARM AND OVERALL MANAGEMENT.  
BY ADAM ROYLE, HCPSL

**O**riginally a grazing property in the heart of the Herbert sugarcane growing region, the Larsen farming enterprise moved to sugarcane when Alan Larsen planted his first billets in 1990.

Fast forward a decade, at the ripe old age of 17, Alan's son Daryl Larsen took over the family farm after his father's passing. Jump forward a further two decades and Daryl has not only expanded the farming enterprise but signed up to a new whole farm management project called Complete Nutrient Management Planning for Cane Farming (or "Herbert RP161").

Farming over 450 hectares comes with a substantial investment in fertiliser and soil ameliorants so for Daryl being able to better predict, manage and keep records of these inputs is extremely important.

This is the primary reason he decided to join the Herbert RP161 project in early 2019. Twelve months on and Daryl says his experience with doing the project has changed the way he manages his nutrient applications.

"Soil testing has been a big part of my farming operations for a while now, but the project has brought it all together in a number of ways," he said.

"In the past I used my soil tests to work out my fertiliser for plant and younger ratoons, but once the crop got past a few ratoons all the blocks got lumped together. Having a whole-of-farm nutrient plan means I can now manage blocks individually if I need to. I now know what each block needs, how much it needs and when it needs it, and that's made a big difference to the way I manage my farm. It also helped me understand which blocks I could manage in a similar way and which blocks needed to be managed differently.

"I know a lot of the focus is on N and phosphorus, but for me it's about supplying all of the nutrients that my crop needs to be able to better utilise the N and phosphorus that I do apply.

"Ameliorants and micronutrients have been much easier to manage since doing a nutrient management plan. I not only know what nutrients my blocks need to grow a crop but also how much it will cost me, what return I might expect and in turn how much I'm prepared to invest for that return prioritising my investment."

Daryl recently went through a Reef protection regulation compliance audit and explained how the nutrient management plan, developed by Herbert Cane

Productivity Services Limited (HCPSL) extension agronomists, helped him provide records for his fertiliser applications.

"Apart from knowing what I need to order and when I need to order it, the nutrient management plan allows me to record my actual applications and any variations in one location and that's been a game changer for me. During a recent compliance audit I could provide 90 percent of what they were asking for in one document, it took a lot of the stress out of the process for me."

Before leaving Daryl to get back to his farming duties we asked him what he would say to another grower who might be considering doing a nutrient management plan under the Herbert RP161 project.

"I admit I was a little sceptical at first but once I saw what it could achieve on my farm and for my farming operations I couldn't imagine being without it. I would recommend it to any grower who wants to have an easy and effective plan to manage their fertiliser applications.

"I know I have mentioned the nutrient management plan a lot, but the project is more than just that. HCPSL and their extension agronomists have always been

there to chat about anything relating to my farming operations."

If you'd like any more information about the Herbert RP161 project give HCPSL a call on 07 4776 1808 and talk to one of their extension agronomists. ■

**The RP161 project is funded by the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program and the Australian Government Reef Trust in partnership with HCPSL and SRA.**

**For more information contact:**  
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*(Above left) HCPSL extension agronomist and Herbert RP161 whole farm nutrient management team leader Adam Royle discusses farming activities with second generation sugarcane farmer Daryl Larsen. (Above) HCPSL Extension Agronomist Shannon O'Brien (left) presenting a 'hands on' N loss activity with Herbert RP161 growers during a Farming 4 CASH® workshop.*