

NORTH QUEENSLAND BANANA INDUSTRY

WATER QUALITY STRATEGY

2017 - 2020



FOREWORD

The banana industry has a great reputation for adopting environmental best management practices. The majority of growers respect the natural environment and the Great Barrier Reef and understand the impact their farming can have on the quality of water in local catchments. There are increasing numbers of growers implementing best management practices on their farms with the industry having reduced the rate of nitrogen application by 40% over the last 10 years. While this is an outstanding achievement, there is room for improvement.

This Water Quality Strategy has been written with a focus on extension and working with growers to help them improve their adoption of nutrient and sediment management practices. It is the goal of the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) to help more growers farm at best practice without compromising their productivity and profitability. Consequently, this Strategy contains targets and actions that demonstrate that the ABGC is committed to helping growers improve the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef. This approach to sustainable farming is increasingly important to many Australians.

The Strategy lays out the priorities for the ABGC for the next three years with a clear focus on reducing the amount of nutrients and soil leaving farms. The ABGC will work closely with funding and delivery partners to develop new extension tools that will support growers adopt practice change so that these changes can be quantified, measured and achieved.

The ABGC encourages growers to get on board and adopt best management practices so that the industry can proudly showcase its responsible approach to farming.



Chair - Australian Banana Growers' Council



GOAL

The banana industry will continue to contribute to improved water quality and health of the Great Barrier Reef.

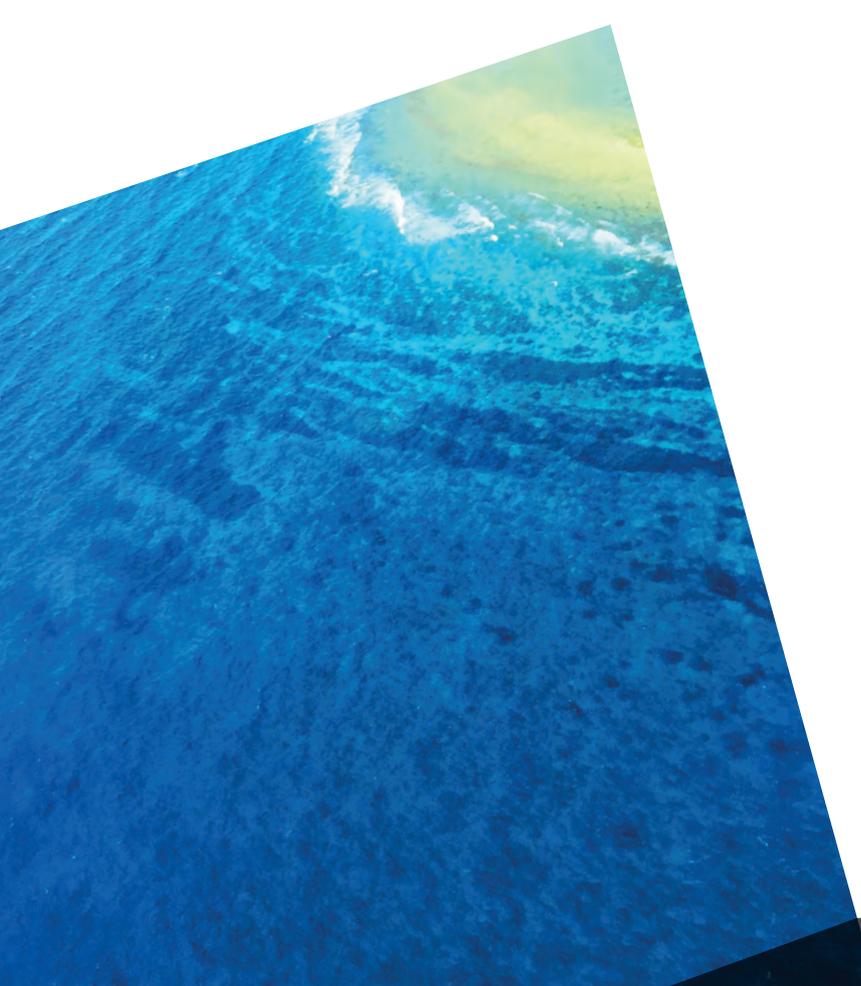
OBJECTIVE

The banana industry will contribute to a 10% decrease in dissolved inorganic nitrogen and a 5% decrease in sediment run off to improve the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Lagoon by 2020.

STRATEGY

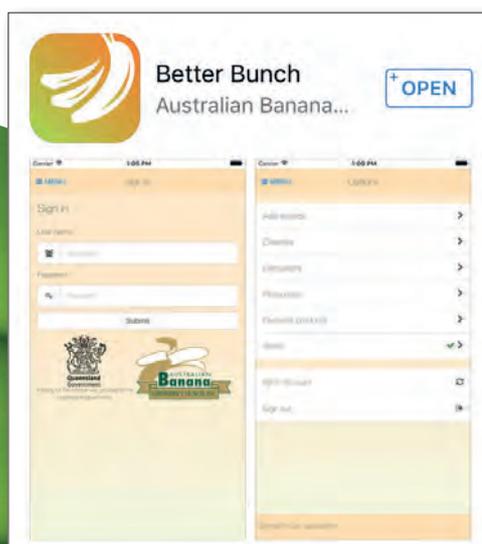
North Queensland banana growers will be supported to improve their production standards and adopt recognised best management practices. Specifically, this strategy will focus on assisting growers to:

- apply the optimum amount of nutrients to their banana crops; and
- retain soil on their farms.



1. Extension Delivery

- Design and deliver a coordinated, multifaceted approach to extension, that will focus on working closely with growers, officers from the Australian and Queensland government departments, natural resource agencies, universities and industry service providers to:
 - identify the optimum rates of nutrient application on a farm and/or block basis;
 - identify and assist growers to implement the most cost effective land management practices;
 - support trialling and validating innovation to establish improved sustainable practices;
 - create opportunities for peer to peer learning from industry champions and innovators;
 - use new technology to improve farming profitability and environmental outcomes;
 - provide access to experts in water quality management; and
 - explain to banana growers, using clear language, the findings and implications of new research about the condition of water quality on the Great Barrier Reef.



Targets

Over the next four years, the banana industry will participate in modelling and monitoring work to identify the production areas and practices that are at the highest risk of contributing to poor water quality and implement changes to management practices to mitigate the risks. Specifically,

- **By June 2019**, at least 43 banana growers (or approximately 4,200 hectares) will have changed their farming practices and adopted 'B' level practices for nutrient and sediment management.
- **By 2020:**
 - At least 70% of all north Queensland banana production land will be farmed using the Banana BMP Guidelines for nutrient and sediment management.
 - All north Queensland growers who have completed the BMP or who are assessed to be farming at industry best practice standards will have access to industry developed extension tools (such as the Better Bunch App) to improve their productivity and profitability.
 - The ABGC will facilitate an effective informal network of industry champions who influence farm management practices across the industry by actively promoting the economic and environmental benefits of adopting BMP and innovative practices.
- **Commencing 2018**, there will be a biennial workshop to keep growers, industry service providers and consultants up-to-date on new developments relating to best management practice, water quality improvements, nutrient management, new products etc



2. Extension material

- Banana growers' adoption of BMP will be supported through the design of extension material and tools. Examples include:
 - Nutrient budgeting tools and plans;
 - Electronic extension and decision making tools such as smart device applications, the BMP Guidelines and videos;
 - Case studies to demonstrate best practice and innovation;
 - BMP Guidelines that reflect evolving best practice;
 - Farm and topographical maps to improve farm layout; and
 - Fact Sheets and other technical information products.

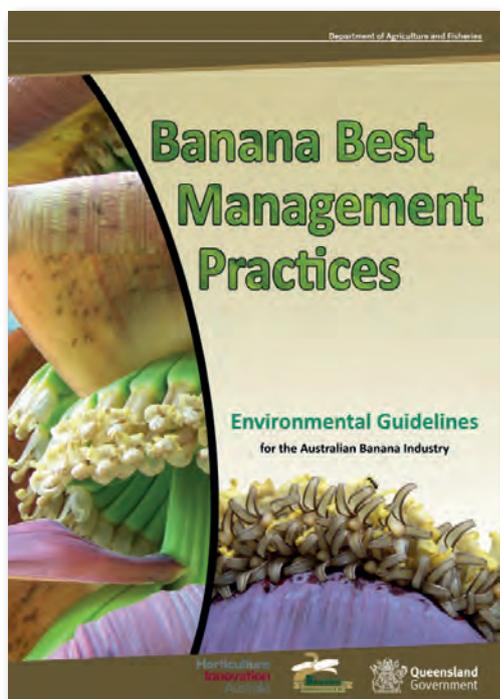
Targets

- **Commencing in 2017**, extension material targeting nutrient and sediment retention (such as the tools listed above) will be developed to inform banana growers of the benefits of adopting best management practices;
- **Commencing in 2017**, there will be a biennial review of extension material and techniques used in other industries – to identify possible new extension opportunities for the banana industry;
- **Commencing in 2018**, there will be a biennial review of banana-industry BMP extension material to ensure it promotes current best practice;
- Production of two videos per year to promote innovation and best management practice.



It is important to keep banana growers and other stakeholders informed about the steps the industry has taken, and is continuing to take, to reduce the loss of nutrients and sediments from farms. Consequently, regular communication and engagement with growers will raise their awareness of the water quality issues impacting on the banana industry as well as the Great Barrier Reef. This will include regularly profiling the efforts and initiative of growers who are delivering on-farm best practice and innovation. The ABGC will use a number of avenues to keep growers informed including:

- Workshops;
- Water quality events and seminars
- Australian Banana Magazine;
- E bulletins;
- ABGC website;
- Banana Congress;
- Social media – including Facebook;
- Media releases;
- Local grower group meetings.



The background features a complex geometric composition. Large, overlapping triangular and quadrilateral shapes in various shades of green (from dark forest green to bright lime green) and blue (from deep navy to vibrant cyan) create a dynamic, layered effect. In the lower-left quadrant, a portion of a coral reef is visible, showing intricate textures and colors of the underwater environment.

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