

Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions Requirements for new or expanded cropping and horticulture activities *Effective from 1 June 2021 (deferred from 1 June 2020)*

The Reef protection regulations started on **1 December 2019** and will be rolled out over the next three years.

The new regulations address land-based sources of water pollution to the Great Barrier Reef. This includes industrial and agricultural activities that release nutrients and sediment across the Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions.

Commencement postponed

The Queensland Government will defer the commencement of the new or expanded commercial cropping and horticulture activities requirement (known as ERA 13A), under the Reef protection regulations until **1 June 2021**. The deferment is in direct response to COVID-19 (coronavirus) and ensures the agricultural community and industry have a full opportunity to provide feedback and a suitable amount of time to prepare for the changes.

Consultation on the draft standard conditions for new or expanded commercial cropping and horticulture activities in the Great Barrier Reef catchment under the Reef protection regulations has been suspended and will recommence later in 2020. However, you can still provide comments.

What are the requirements for new or expanded cropping and horticulture activities?

From 1 June 2021 (deferred from 1 June 2020), new or expanded commercial cropping and horticulture activities in the Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions on five hectares or more that do not meet the cropping history test will require an environmental authority (permit) before the activity or any work takes place.

A cropping history is when cropping or horticulture activities have occurred during three out of the last 10 years (with at least one of the years being in the last five years). The cropping history test includes all types of crops including non-commercial, rotational, changing from one crop to another, sequencing or break crops and fodder crops.

Crops that are grown in a closed system (e.g. hydroponically), forestry, and non-commercial crops are not captured by the new requirements.

An example of a non-commercial crop is where fodder crops are grown by graziers for their own cattle and are not sold to other producers.

Recently started new cropping or horticulture activities (including preparatory work) that began before 1 June 2021 on land that does not yet meet the cropping history test will have five years to meet the test. However, an environmental authority will be required for future cropping or horticulture activities if the cropping history test does not continue to be met.



New or expanded cropping or horticulture activities on land between five and 100 hectares will have a simplified application process and will need to meet standard conditions for a standard environmental authority. Producers will be able to apply to vary the standard conditions if required.

New or expanded cropping or horticulture activities over 100 hectares will need to make a site specific application to determine any tailored conditions to manage water quality risks for the newly cropped area.

Banana growers who are relocating due to TR4 Panama disease will only need to apply for a standard environmental authority, subject to the standard conditions, regardless of the size of the new cropping activity.

The requirements apply to all types of crops including grains and horticulture, sugarcane and banana production.

The newly cropped land will also need to meet minimum practice agricultural standards where these apply to the crop(s) being grown.

Producers will be able to apply for an environmental authority by contacting the Permits and Licencing Management area within the Department of Environment and Science. Further information is at the end of this fact sheet.

What are the standard conditions?

The standard conditions aim to achieve 'no net decline' in water quality from new activities by preventing and minimising nutrient and sediment run-off.

They relate to the way the land (or features of the land) and farming infrastructure are designed, implemented and maintained. They include soil and erosion control measures and irrigation requirements.

You can view the draft standard conditions at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations and this will be subject to further consultation later in 2020.

Consultation

Public consultation on the draft standard conditions has been suspended. However, you can continue to provide comment via email or post:

Email:

Reef protection regulations
officeoftheGBR@des.qld.gov.au

Mail:

Reef protection regulations
Office of the Great Barrier Reef
Department of Environment and Science
GPO Box 2454
Brisbane QLD 4001

For more information, email officeofthegbr@des.qld.gov.au or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

What are the minimum practice agricultural standards?

Producers undertaking new cropping or horticulture activities are also required to meet minimum practice agricultural standards where these are prescribed by regulation.

You can view the standards that apply for sugarcane, grazing and bananas at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Do I need an environmental authority to start grazing?

New grazing activity does not require an environmental authority.

However, where minimum practice agricultural standards are in place for grazing, they must be followed.

Who do I contact about obtaining an environmental authority?

For further information about environmental authorities, please contact the Department of Environment and Science Permits and Licencing Management area:

Web: www.environment.des.qld.gov.au/licences-permits/types

Email: palm@des.qld.gov.au

Telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Where can I find more information?

Web: www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Email: officeofthegbr@des.qld.gov.au

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