

Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions

Recognised accreditation programs and acknowledged practice change projects

The Reef protection regulations address land-based sources of water pollution flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. This includes agricultural and **industrial sources** of nutrient and sediment pollution from all six **Reef regions** – Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary.

Producers participating in recognised accreditation programs or acknowledged practice change projects are considered a lower priority for compliance inspections under the Reef protection regulations.

These programs align to or achieve more than the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standards that apply for sugarcane and banana growing and grazing in the Reef regions.

As at May 2026, over 460 sugarcane growing, banana growing and grazing businesses were listed as a lower compliance priority through their involvement in recognised programs and acknowledged projects.

What is a recognised accreditation program?

Third party accreditation and certification programs such as industry Best Management Practice (BMP) programs can apply to be a recognised accreditation program for a period of up to five years.

A recognised accreditation program meets the following criteria:

- standards are in place that are consistent with, or better than, the Agricultural

Environmentally Relevant Activity standards under the Reef protection regulations

- producers who comply with the program's requirements are accredited through an independent, third party audit
- information about the operation of the program is collected, managed and reported
- governance and administration arrangements are in place for the ownership, operation and management of the program
- the program is regularly reviewed and updated
- a register of accredited lands is in place and provided annually to the government (including landholder contact and business details and the location of the land on which the activity occurs).

To apply for program recognition, please contact the Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, telephone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or email officeofthegbr@detsi.qld.gov.au.

What is the benefit of becoming an accredited producer?

Producers who are accredited or certified under a recognised program are deemed to have met the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant standards through an industry supported pathway. The government will add the landholder's contact and location details as supplied by the recognised program to a confidential list of producers who are

regarded as a lower priority for Reef protection compliance inspections.

The property or farm (s) accredited under the program will remain on this list while their accreditation is current and their accreditation program maintains its recognition under the regulations.

Which accreditation programs are recognised?

For sugarcane growers, the [Smartcane BMP program](#) delivered by CANEGROWERS has been granted recognition up to July 2026. An application for renewal is currently underway.

For banana growers, the [Freshcare Environmental Program – Reef Assured](#) has been granted recognition up to April 2031.

What is an acknowledged practice change project?

Government funded projects that work with producers to improve one or more farming practices that directly reduce nutrient and/or sediment run-off from agricultural properties in the Reef regions can apply to become an acknowledged practice change project.

Acknowledged practice change projects must:

- support participants to take actions that directly reduce nutrient and/or sediment run-off from their property in a Reef region
- promote actions that are consistent with, and do not contravene, the Reef protection regulations
- ensure participants are aware of their obligation to meet all of the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant standards
- record and provide details of consenting participants to the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI).

To apply for project acknowledgement, please contact the Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, telephone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or email officeofthegbr@detsi.qld.gov.au.

What is the benefit of participating in an acknowledged practice change project?

The property or farm (s) participating in an acknowledged practice change project will be considered a lower priority for Reef protection compliance inspections while they are actively involved in the project.

Practice change projects help producers to adopt or change specific farming practices, e.g. nutrient management with the aim of improving water quality outcomes.

While the project may target only one or more practices that align to the relevant Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard, the project needs to ensure participants are aware of their obligation to comply with all requirements.

The project owner will seek consent from participants for their contact and location details to be provided to the government. The government will add the participating property details to a confidential list which is considered when Reef protection compliance inspections are prioritised.

Which practice change projects are acknowledged?

The list of acknowledged projects changes as projects start or end. This list is current as at July 2025.

Grazing:

- [Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions \(GRASS\) program](#) (2023-2026) delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG), Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) and NQ Dry Tropics (NQDT). Please note, details of participants that joined in 2022 have been transferred to GRASS (2023-2026) with their consent.
- *Empowering Adaptive Graziers* delivered by Burnett Mary Regional Group in the Burnett Mary catchment.
- *Pioneer Plus* delivered by Resource Consulting Services in the Fitzroy catchment.

Sugarcane:

- **Smartcane BMP** (Phase 4) where growers are working to achieve accreditation within 12 months, delivered by CANEGROWERS.
- The *Sugarcane Practice Change Program* delivered by Sugar Research Australia in the Burnett-Mary catchment.
- *Project Pathfinder* delivered by Resource Consulting Services in the Mackay-Whitsunday catchment.
- *The Targeting balanced nutrition and productivity constraints in the Herbert* project delivered by Sugar Research Australia in the Wet Tropics catchment.
- *The Making Positive Change in the Herbert Region* project delivered by Tropical Agricultural Services in the Wet Tropics catchment.

Why is data collected and how is confidential information treated?

The government undertakes compliance activities under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

In order for properties to be considered a lower priority for compliance, programs or projects provide the government with some basic property details. This information is limited and includes:

- property address
- location of the land on which the activity occurs (lot and plan number/s)
- ABN/ACN
- contact information
- the term of accreditation or project term
- for accredited persons, any terms and conditions aligned with their accreditation.

Details about farming practices undertaken on the land **are not provided**.

This information is only used for the period of accreditation or participation in the acknowledged practice change project.

Information is stored on a secure site only accessible to authorised Queensland Government officers. Personal information will not be disclosed by the government to any other parties, or for any purpose other than that for which it was collected, without the producer's consent or unless the government is required by law to disclose it. Individual property data cannot be published or made public in any way.

For further information about privacy and consent, please contact your accreditation program provider or project provider.

You can also contact the department at officeofthegbr@detsi.qld.gov.au or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68). For further privacy information visit [your privacy](#) or email privacy@detsi.qld.gov.au

Reporting on management practice change

For on-ground projects funded under Queensland and Australian government Reef investment programs, participants consent to providing land management practice data to the Department of Primary Industries through the [Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program](#). The aggregated, de-identified data informs the design of Reef investment programs and the [Reef water quality report cards](#)

This data is not used for planning compliance activities.