

# Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



## Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions Record keeping requirements for agricultural producers

The Reef protection regulations started on **1 December 2019** and are rolling out over five years.

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

### What records need to be kept?

Producers undertaking commercial beef cattle grazing, sugarcane or banana cultivation in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions need to keep:

1. general records
2. minimum standard records (including farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget records for sugarcane growers).

**There is no specific format these records need to be kept in and many producers will already be recording this information using industry developed forms.**

Producers in the Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions who hold an environmental authority (permit) for new or expanding commercial cropping or horticulture must also keep records in accordance with the conditions of their permit.

### When do I need to start keeping records?

Existing producers have been required to keep general records since **1 December 2019** and minimum standard records once the minimum practice agricultural standards commence in their region. Please refer to the timeframes on page 3.

New or expanding producers must keep any general records and minimum standard records (including farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget records for sugarcane growers) that apply to the crop(s) being grown, and any records required by their permit, once the permit starts.

### What are general records?

General records are information about the person carrying out the activity (i.e. commercial beef cattle grazing, sugarcane or banana cultivation) and the property it is being carried out on.

In addition, records must be kept about fertiliser and mill mud or mill mud/mill ash mix applied to the property as part of carrying out the activity.

These records need to be supported by primary documents such as leaf or soil tests, fertiliser contractor print-outs or fertiliser invoices.

## What are minimum standard records?

Minimum standard records need to be kept to demonstrate activities are being undertaken on the property in accordance with the minimum agricultural practice standards. They are notes about the actions taken to meet the standards.

Minimum standard records are different depending on the commodity (grazing, sugarcane or bananas). They build on the general records and must be supported by primary documents.

### **Requirements for sugarcane growers**

For **sugarcane**, the minimum standard records must include nitrogen and phosphorus calculations, fertiliser application methods, soil testing results, property and soil maps. Example forms to record sugarcane soil sampling details are included in the [Prescribed methodology for sugarcane](#) which can be found at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations)

Sugarcane growers in the Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday and Wet Tropics regions have been required to keep minimum standard records since 1 December 2019. Growers in the Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions must do this from 1 December 2022 or on commencement of a permit for new or expanding commercial cropping or horticulture (whichever occurs first).

In addition, sugarcane growers will need to keep records about their **farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget**. This includes records of the whole-of-farm amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus calculation, previously applied amounts, actual and historic yields, and a farm map including constraints to yield (e.g. areas with a history of lower yields – could be from waterlogging, sodicity, compaction, crop age). They also need to be supported by primary documents.

Sugarcane growers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay Whitsunday regions have been required to keep records about their farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget since from 1 December 2021. Growers in the Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions must keep them from 1 December 2022 or on commencement of a permit for new or expanding commercial cropping or horticulture (whichever occurs first).

### **Requirements for graziers**

For **grazing**, the minimum standard records must include the measures taken to improve land towards good or fair condition, along with the location and date of these actions.

Graziers have been required to keep minimum standard records since 1 December 2020 in the Burdekin region and in the Fitzroy region since 1 December 2021. Graziers in the Wet Tropics, Mackay Whitsunday and Burnett Mary regions must do this from 1 December 2022.

### **Requirements for banana growers**

For **bananas**, the minimum standard records must include nitrogen and phosphorus calculations and fertiliser application methods. When the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus exceeds the threshold level outlined in the minimum practice agricultural standard, growers must have a nutrient management plan and record the elements of the plan, including leaf sampling results. An example of a leaf sampling record form is included in the [Prescribed methodology for bananas](#) which can be found at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations)

Banana growers in the Wet Tropics region have been required to keep minimum standard records since 1 December 2020. Growers in the Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions must do this from 1 December 2022 or on commencement of a permit for new or expanding commercial cropping or horticulture (whichever occurs first).

## What are primary documents?

Primary documents are documents that relate to the record, for example a leaf or soil test report, fertiliser contractor print-out or fertiliser invoice. They must be kept and may be requested by an authorised person such as a Queensland Government compliance officer.

### **When do I need to make the record and how long do I need to keep the record for?**

General records and minimum standard records must be made within three days of the activity or action. They must be kept for at least six years.

Producers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay Whitsunday regions who were required to create and keep records prior to 1 December 2019 must now keep these records for six years (previously five years).

### **What happens to my records?**

Records need to be made available for inspection when requested by an authorised person such as a Queensland Government compliance officer. These records will be assessed against the regulations to determine compliance.

Information collected by the Queensland Government must only be collected, stored and used in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

You can read more about the department's privacy responsibilities at [www.des.qld.gov.au/help/legal/privacy](http://www.des.qld.gov.au/help/legal/privacy)

The government has committed to not commencing the regulation to acquire specific agricultural data from the broader agricultural sector, such as data about fertiliser use, soil testing and crop yield.

### **What about records about agricultural chemicals?**

You might also be required to keep records because of other legal requirements.

For example, the *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988* requires records to be kept about the use and application of agricultural chemicals.

For more information on this requirement, please refer to 'Agricultural chemicals' on the Business Queensland website at [www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)

### **Where can I find more information?**

**Web:** [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations)

**Email:** [officeofthegbr@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:officeofthegbr@des.qld.gov.au)

**Telephone:** 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

## Timeframes

Region		General record keeping requirements	Minimum practice agricultural standards	Farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget (sugarcane only)	Permit for new or expanding cropping activities
Sugarcane	Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay Whitsunday	1 December 2019	1 December 2019	1 December 2021*	1 June 2021
	Burnett Mary and Fitzroy	1 December 2019	1 December 2022*	1 December 2022*	1 June 2021
	Cape York	N/A*	N/A*	N/A*	1 June 2021
Grazing	Burdekin	1 December 2019	1 December 2020	N/A	N/A
	Fitzroy	1 December 2019	1 December 2021	N/A	N/A
	Wet Tropics, Mackay Whitsunday and Burnett Mary	1 December 2019	1 December 2022	N/A	N/A
	Cape York	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bananas	Wet Tropics	1 December 2019	1 December 2020	N/A	1 June 2021
	Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary	1 December 2019	1 December 2022*	N/A	1 June 2021
	Cape York	N/A*	N/A*	N/A	1 June 2021
Grains	All regions except Cape York	Proposed 1 December 2024	Proposed 1 December 2024	N/A	1 June 2021
	Cape York	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 June 2021
Horticulture	All regions except Cape York	Proposed 1 December 2024	Proposed 1 December 2024	N/A	1 June 2021
	Cape York	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 June 2021
<p>New or changed regulated industrial activities must meet new discharge standards from 1 June 2021.</p> <p>* For new or expanding cropping and horticulture activities this requirement applies from commencement of the environmental authority (permit).</p>					