

## Farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget

From 1 December 2021, sugarcane growers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay Whitsunday regions will need a farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget to calculate the amount of fertiliser they can apply. This must be developed prior to applying fertiliser in the 2022 season.

The requirements still use soil testing and the regulated method, which uses parts of the SIX EASY STEPS™, to work out nitrogen and phosphorus rates for each block. However, growers can now refine these rates across their farm as long as they do not exceed the whole-of-farm amount.

Refining rates with support from an appropriately skilled person and based on sound agronomy can help to improve nutrient use efficiency.

The first farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget must be developed and verified by an appropriate person and then reviewed by an appropriate person every five years.

An appropriate person includes a third-party such as an agronomist. That person must have the relevant professional qualifications, training, skills or experience including the ability to assess and provide advice and analysis relevant to the farm, block and/or management zone based on protocols, standards, methods or literature.

Advisers or growers who are certified under the [Fertcare Accredited Advisor Program](#) are also considered an appropriate person.

Sugarcane growers can develop and verify their own farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget if they have the appropriate skills, qualifications or experience which have been obtained through a training program endorsed by the Department of Environment and Science.

Recognised grower training programs for farm nutrient management are:

- [Better Soils Management Course](#) (delivered by Back Paddock)
- Other training or education which is mapped to the following Units of Competency from the Rural Training Package:
  - [AHCWRK301](#) – Collect samples for a rural production or horticulture monitoring program
  - [AHCPCM406](#) – Develop a soil health and plant nutrition program
  - [AHCPCM513](#) – Conduct environment and food safety risk assessment of plant nutrition and soil fertility programs.

Growers who are accredited under the [Smartcane Best Management Practice \(BMP\) Program](#), which is a [recognised accreditation program](#), do not need to use an appropriate person to update, review or verify their farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget while they hold a current accreditation.

For more information about the requirements, refer to the [Farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget guide](#) (PDF, 3 MB).

Watch this video to learn more about developing the budget.

## **Sugarcane nitrogen and phosphorus budget**

This video outlines the process to develop a sugarcane nitrogen and phosphorus budget as required under the Reef protection regulations including answering some commonly asked questions.

Duration 00:09:03

[Show/hide Transcript](#)

## **Record keeping**

All sugarcane producers are required to keep records. These can be in any format but must be made within three business days of applying fertiliser, mill mud, mill ash or agricultural chemicals, kept for at least six years and be available when requested by an authorised person such as a compliance officer.

Farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget records must specifically include the following with supporting primary documents (soil test reports, fertiliser contractor print-outs, fertiliser invoices etc.) as proof of the records:

1. calculated whole of farm nitrogen amount for the following harvest period (kg)
2. calculated whole of farm phosphorus amount for the following harvest period (kg)
3. annual amount of nitrogen applied to the whole of farm for the previous harvest period (kg or tonnes)
4. annual amount of phosphorus applied to the whole of farm for the previous harvest period (kg or tonnes)
5. actual yield achieved for the previous harvest period (tonnes/cane/ha)
6. historical yields (if applicable) (tonnes/cane/ha)
7. a farm map including:
  - a. farm number or unique identifier/s
  - b. block boundaries
  - c. block identifiers
  - d. area of each block (in hectares)
  - e. area of whole of farm (in hectares)
  - f. crop class and fallow areas
  - g. identification of any physical or soil chemical constraints to yield (if they exist) for each management zones and/or blocks

8. name(s) and contact details of the appropriate person who developed and/or verified the farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget
9. date the farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget was developed and verified.