

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*

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

The 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.

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

From 1 June 2021, 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.

The requirements for new or expanded cropping or horticulture activities (known as ERA 13A) aim to achieve 'no net decline' in water quality by preventing and minimising nutrient and sediment run-off.

The requirements apply to most types of crops including grains and horticulture, sugarcane and banana production but not timber production. Crops that are grown in a closed system (e.g. hydroponically), forestry, and non-commercial crops are not captured by the new requirements.

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.

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.

Provided the land meets the cropping history test, a permit is not required to change crops.

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. 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. 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 the department to determine any tailored conditions to manage water quality risks for the new cropping area.



Banana growers who are relocating due to TR4 Panama disease on land for which a Notice has been issued under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* will only need to submit a standard or variation application, regardless of the size of the new cropping area.

The new cropping area 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 Licensing 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 draft standard conditions relate to the way the land (or features of the land) 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. Consultation on the draft standard conditions has now closed and these are being finalised.

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.

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 Licensing 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

Telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)