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Minister for the Environment and Energy

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Queensland Minister for Environment

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

24 March 2017

QUEENSLAND CANEGROWERS TO FAST-TRACK TESTING OF HIGH EFFICIENCY FERTILISERS

Queensland CANEGROWERS has been awarded \$7.1 million by the Australian and Queensland governments to support on-farm trials of high efficiency fertilisers across all cane growing regions that flow to the Great Barrier Reef.

Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy Mr Josh Frydenberg and Queensland Minister for the Great Barrier Reef Dr Steven Miles today announced the successful tenderer was a consortium led by CANEGROWERS.

“Sixty trials over three cane growing seasons, across a wide range of production systems, soil types and climate zones, will be conducted” Mr Frydenberg said.

“The new and more efficient fertilisers have the ability to better control the release of nutrients than conventional fertilisers and reduce losses.

“This new generation of fertilisers have the potential to increase farmer profit margins through improving yields, whilst at the same time benefiting the Great Barrier Reef by reducing fertiliser run-off and thereby improving water quality.”

Mr Frydenberg said it was the first time both governments had jointly funded and delivered a project through the Reef Trust.

“The trials will be supervised by Sugar Research Australia, the cane industry’s leading research organisation which has a deep understanding of all aspects of sugarcane agronomy,” Mr Frydenberg said.

“In addition, a National Environmental Science Programme project focused on on-farm nitrogen management will inform the design and monitoring of the trials to ensure they incorporate regional environmental conditions and production systems.”

Dr Miles said the Queensland Government was co-investing through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program’s Innovation Fund.

“The Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce found innovative farming practices would be required to meet our water quality targets. Through this fund we are directly supporting new approaches that will ensure clean water flows to the reef,” Dr Miles said.

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“All trials will be monitored for impacts on the farm ‘bottom line’ and selected trials monitored for the impacts on the quality of water leaving the farms. Advice will also be sought on farmers’ experiences with incorporating the new technology into their farming systems,” Dr Miles said.

Dr Miles said this program of coordinated trials would complement a range of existing and planned initiatives including water quality improvement projects, research projects, the Smartcane Best Management Practice farm management system and industry extension capacity.

The Australian and Queensland governments are investing more than \$2 billion over the coming decade to improve the health of the Reef through the Reef 2050 Plan.

This includes money to improve water quality, remove the crown of thorns starfish and to build our scientific knowledge of the reef.

Of the 151 actions scheduled in the initial five years of the Reef 2050 Plan, 32 have been completed and another 103 are underway and on track.

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