

MEDIA RELEASE

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Reef and Rainforest Research Centre - Cairns, Australia

For immediate release



## New fertilizers to protect Reef and farm profitability

Scientists in Far North Queensland are trialling new fertilizers that could reduce levels of run-off containing high levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN), a major health threat to the Great Barrier Reef that has been linked to coral bleaching and Crown of Thorns Starfish outbreaks.

Prof Mike Bell from the University of Queensland is leading a research project under the Tropical Water Quality Hub of the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme that explores the potential of Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizers (EEFs) to achieve reductions in nitrogen run-off in the sugarcane industry without impacting farmers' bottom line.

EEFs include fertilizer types that release nitrogen into the soil at a controlled rate or prevent nitrogen converting into easily-lost nitrate.

The fertilizers are being trialled at several sites across northern Queensland, including Tully, Mackay, Silkwood and the Burdekin.

Prof Bell said the results of the project could help farmers reduce both waste and environmental impact.

"Right now, offsite losses of applied nitrogen are a feature of some cane growing districts, and the most reliable way of preventing a resulting loss of cane yield has been to apply lots of extra nitrogen," he said.

"The lost nitrogen contributes nothing to crop yields and can end up in the water system."

"Hopefully through this project we can demonstrate that EEFs can be used to minimize those nitrogen losses, eliminating the need to apply those high N rates without sacrificing crop yield."

**ENDS**

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