



FITZROY BASIN ASSOCIATION

Our country, Our future.

A move to minimum till Grains BMP enables change



Erosion control on 'Euroka'

Despite more than 50 years farming experience, extraordinary wet seasons have made the last few years the toughest in terms of erosion control for Eion and Anne Anderson.

The Andersons own three properties east of Middlemount in central Queensland near the Isaac River, a tributary of the Fitzroy River which flows into the Great Barrier Reef.

"Due to some extreme rain events, the last four years have been the most difficult to control erosion. Consequently, we have been spending large amounts of money restoring some of our cultivation country," Eion Anderson said.

The Euroka partnership is a family affair, with Eion and Anne joined by their sons Colin and Mark, and their wives, to manage more than 13,000 hectares.

The enterprise is primarily grazing, but 2,200 ha of land is used for dry land farming, mostly sorghum.

Grains BMP reveals possibilities

To boost the profitability and sustainability of their cropping land, Eion and son Mark attended a Grains Best Management Practices (BMP) workshop offered by the Three Rivers sub-region of Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated (FBA).

FBA developed Grains BMP with partners AgForce and the Queensland Government to help growers improve their businesses while also benchmarking industry performance.

The Andersons used Grains BMP to self-assess their business and develop a plan of attack to reduce the loss of precious topsoil on their cultivation country.

They decided their future depended on a shift from conventional farming to minimum tillage and installing contour banks to limit sediment movement after rainfall events.

Grains BMP helped them recognise the benefits of key technologies involved in controlled traffic farming, such as a guidance system for tractors to assist with the accurate application of seed, fertiliser, and chemicals.

They had been operating without any guidance system on farm and using a contractor for spraying cultivation, which wasn't always practical due to demand for the contractors' services.

Grant helps with transition

With help from the Three Rivers sub-region to develop and submit a project application, the Anderson family obtained a grant from FBA through the Reef Rescue component of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.

The grant of \$8623.75 was delivered in late 2012, matching an investment made by the Anderson family. They purchased a Trimble CFX 750 with Omnistar XP/HP and EZ steer assisted steering system, which will be used for all tractors on their farm.

The auto steer system allows precise movement of tractors across paddocks, reducing soil compaction and keeping more soil water stored on-farm.



The system has also improved the accuracy of pesticide application, leading to a reduction in the total amount of pesticide applied through minimisation of boom spray overlap.

With less chemicals and better rainfall capture, the changes made by the Andersons are resulting in less sediment and pesticides moving into nearby waterways, protecting the reef ecosystem from contaminants.

"It has been a huge help to have the funding to upgrade our tractors to be more accurate to help our farming be more sustainable for the future," Eion Anderson said.

The move toward controlled traffic farming has also given the family the ability to accurately log and map practices during pesticide applications by using the GPS firmware.

Eion's son Colin and his wife Jodi also attended a property mapping workshop and purchased mapping software with the grant money, which will enable the family to update property mapping and better plan their management strategies.