

Australian passionfruit growers *doing their bit for Reef water quality*

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers

Australia produces around 5,000 tonnes of passionfruit annually from major growing regions in the Tweed Valley in northern New South Wales, and along the Queensland coast including the Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay, Daintree, Cooktown and Mareeba, and new regions in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

With many of these east coast regions in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchment, the passionfruit industry has an important stewardship role to play in contributing to Reef water quality improvements.

For the past decade, the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), through our project delivery arm Growcom, has been supporting growers within the GBR catchment to benchmark nutrient, pesticide, irrigation, and sediment management practices to identify risks to Reef water quality, and support growers in making improvements to reduce those risks and improve their business productivity.

The horticulture industry has been very active -collectively more than 41,000 hectares has been benchmarked using Hort360, the best management practice (BMP) platform developed specifically for commercial horticulture growers.

Hort360 is a free resource for all horticulture growers and a useful tool to gain insight on changes needed on-farm to prevent losses of fertiliser, pesticide, run-off, and nutrients.

Practices that contribute to Reef water quality improvement and are considered as industry standard for passionfruit orchard management include:

- Grass cover under trellis and minimisation of bare earth
- Use of mulch and compost to increase soil organic carbon and overall soil moisture holding capacity

- Vegetated gullies or drains between blocks to slow and capture any run-off before reaching waterways
- Soil moisture monitoring devices which measure moisture for irrigation scheduling, conserving water and nutrients in the soil

Incremental changes to adopt these practices makes a significant contribution to improving Reef water quality and demonstrates industry stewardship in GBR catchments.



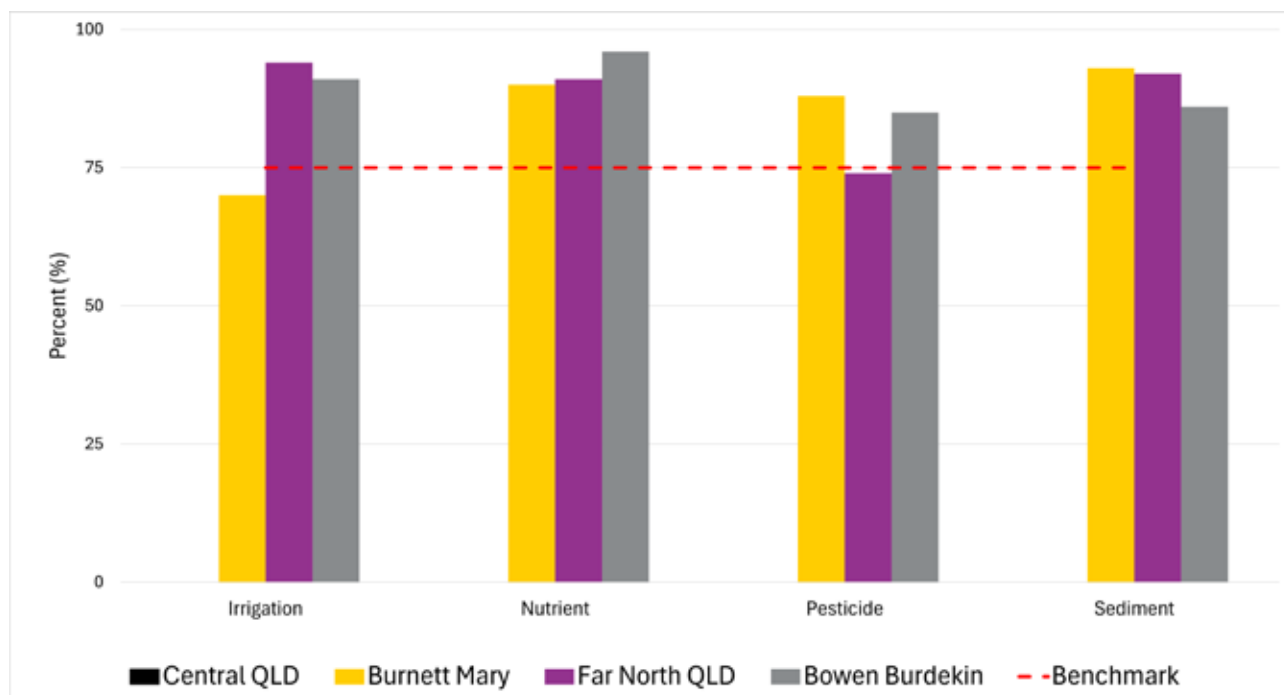
George Costa from Tolga, benchmarked in 2023 in the GBR, Barron Catchment, wonderful example of ground cover and minimal bare earth.

Photo credit: Paula Ibell, Growcom

The graph demonstrates the average results for irrigation, nutrition, pesticide, and sediment modules for passionfruit growers in each region. The hatched red line is the 'minimum standard' or 'benchmark' since the program commenced in 2018. It represents the results of practices benchmarked by passionfruit growers between 2018 and 2023.

Average benchmarking results across the GBR reporting regions - June 2024.

There is no data for the Central QLD region.



Growcom has three dedicated Facilitators in the GBR catchment that can assist growers to benchmark practices, make necessary improvements and organise an independent audit. Growcom is tailoring extension delivery to include as many growers as possible.

Our approach includes:

- Coordinating group activities – field days, workshops, paddock walks
- Facilitating peer to peer study groups
- One-on-one farm visits
- Connecting growers with expertise
- Assisting growers to use Hort360 to benchmark practices



Passionfruit growers interested in coming on board are encouraged to contact their closest *Facilitator*:

Michelle Haase

Southern GBR (Burnett / Fitzroy)

email mhaase@qfvg.com.au

phone 0428 586 890

Paula Ibell

Northern GBR (Far North Qld)

email pibell@qfvg.com.au

phone 0498 119 633

Andrew Conway

Central GBR (Bowen Burdekin)

email aconway@qfvg.com.au

phone 0408 104 967

The Hort360 Great Barrier Reef project is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program. For more information, including case studies and factsheets, visit: www.growcom.com.au/hort360-gbr