

# Project Catalyst Update



Once again, the Project Catalyst team and growers are busy harvesting trials and assessing practice change adoptions. There has been a lot going on for all of us, so we've combined the July and September quarterly newsletters to keep you up to date about our continuing, new and future funding, on ground projects and upcoming activities. Project Catalyst updates are also available on the Project Catalyst website [www.projectcatalyst.net.au](http://www.projectcatalyst.net.au). A text or email will be sent out to notify you when updates are available to be viewed.

## Catalyst Family

Many of us have managed to return to a degree of normality since the lockdown in March /April and we trust that everyone is faring well. The Catalyst family has grown recently with the introduction of 23 new growers across the Burdekin and Wet Tropics in June 2020, supported under Coea Cola's Broader Adoption program, plus 2 more growers under GBRF funding. This brings the number of growers currently supported by Catalyst to 151 across a mix of 155 innovation trials, broader adoption projects and grower support activities. Catalyst is currently working with growers on over 41,000ha of farmlands. We also welcome Nutrien Ag Solutions to the Catalyst family. Nutrien joins the projects other professional services delivery teams and brings the number of on ground service providers across the Mackay Whitsunday, Burdekin and Wet Tropics to 8.

## Project Catalyst and our ongoing COVID-19 Responsibilities

As proud Queenslanders we continue to manage our COVID-19 responsibilities, and hopefully we will continue to enjoy the many freedoms our southern neighbours miss. Although social distancing and public gathering restrictions continue to impact our extension activities, we are making every effort to restart our shed meeting programs, support and attend field days and keep in contact with you all. In all other respects, we will continue to operate the project by taking a 'business as usual approach' as much as possible. Thank



you all for working with our on-ground service providers and partners with the measures they put in place. It is great that we continue to be a highly motivated and effective team.

**Feel free to contact us for help or support at any time.**

## Recent Events

Ross, from Catchment Solutions, headed up to Mareeba with Lawrence, Megan and Ellie (from HCPSSL) and Hayden Di Bella (Project Catalyst grower) to help out with the Savannah Ag Research Spring Field Day. The event presented a range of crops and trials investigating rotational and cover crop options for sugarcane, cotton, broad acre and horticulture cropping systems for soil health and nutrition, weed and disease control, and cash flow opportunities. The HCPSSL team had the opportunity to explain to 120+ attendees mixed species fallow cropping systems as promoted by

Project Catalyst. Thanks also to Tony (Savannah Ag Consulting) for organising the event – and to Nutrien Ag Solutions for a top-notch steak sandwich lunch. It was also great to catch up with some of our Catalyst growers on the trip.

Burdekin Productivity Services, SRA and Farmacist also kicked off their shed meetings in August. The jointly run program included 15 shed meetings across the district where over 180 growers attended. Project Catalyst has been involved in several chemical runoff trials in the region over the last few years and one of the subjects raised at the recent shed meetings was the excellent work growers have been doing to reduce pesticide exceedances into the Baratta system which is monitored by scientific agencies. They also discussed how to identify soil variability using EM technology and ways to improve nitrogen use efficiency by understanding soil constraints such as sodicity, which has also been a focus of



Great Barrier  
Reef Foundation





Savannah Ag Research Spring Field Day - Mareeba

numerous Project Catalyst trials across several regions.

All of our past and current trial reports, case studies fact sheets and grower stories can be viewed on the Project Catalyst website project area at this [Link](#). Use the filter options to narrow down the topics or regions you are interested in.

## New Projects

### Mackay & Plane Creek practice change adoption

Catchment Solutions has secured 4 years of **Great Barrier Reef Foundation** project funding for Project Catalyst to engage growers in the Pioneer and Plane Creek catchments. This funding will allow Nutrien Ag Solutions to work with new Project Catalyst growers to adopt farm management practice change activities with the aim of improving productivity and water quality outcomes. View the project announcement here: [Water Quality](#).

### Weed Control using Microwave Technology

In a partnership led by Catchment Solutions, the **Great Barrier Reef Foundation** is supporting Project Catalyst, Burdekin Productivity Services, Growave and the University of Melbourne to trial and validate weed control in sugarcane with microwave (thermal) technology. If proven effective, this technology will contribute to significant reductions in industry's reliance on herbicides for weed and seed bank control. A pilot program will be carried out on irrigated canelands in the Burdekin over the next 18 months. View the project announcement here: [Innovation](#).

## Pending projects

### Lower Herbert practice change adoption

The **Great Barrier Reef Foundation** is still assessing Project Catalyst' application to run a practice change adoption program the Lower Herbert. We envisage we will know whether this application has been successful in the coming months.

### Unsuccessful funding applications

We continue to seek additional funding for innovation trial activities for Project Catalyst. Although we were successful with the Microwave Technology for Weed Control project several other applications did not get up on this round of funding.

Over coming months, we will be speaking with funding partners past, present and potential as we look to identify other opportunities for project funding. We can see that securing on-ground innovation

funding, at scale, is becoming increasingly more challenging, with a shift in public and private donors to supporting broader adoption of existing best practices, presumably as this provides a greater likelihood of a return on investment. We will keep you updated on our future proposals to secure further funding for innovation.

### Update from Coca-Cola and WWF-Australia

Commencing this year, the funds from the Coca-Cola Foundation are supporting the broader adoption of best practices, with 23 growers new to the project coming on board in the Wet Tropics and Burdekin. These growers, who farm about 5,200 ha, are adopting a range of practices new to their farms, including precision nutrient, weed and pest management, legume fallow, and variable rate nutrient management within block. The funding application to continue this work into 2021 has been submitted to the Coca-Cola Foundation.



University of Melbourne's Dr Graham Brodie with a Growave microwave prototype

## New signs

Project Catalyst “Harvesting Innovation in Sugarcane” corflute signs are now available to promote Project Catalysts innovation sites. Please see your on ground service provider if you'd like one. Shortly we will also have “Practice Change in Sugarcane” signs available for our broader adoption and practice change growers. Your on ground service providers will be able to provide these to you in the coming months.

## Project Catalyst Grower Forum 2021

Planning for the Project Catalyst Grower Forum 2021 is well underway. The event will be held on Sunday 21st to Tuesday 23rd February 2021 at The Ville (Casino & Resort) Townsville. Please save these dates and watch out for further details. Can we also ask growers to work with your Project Catalyst service providers to develop up trial and activity presentations and talks? We really appreciate growers stepping up to help with this and the more you tell us, the more we can deliver a Forum with the content and format that most suits your needs.

## Digital Communications Strategy

A large number of our growers are participating in a survey looking at broadening our digital communication and extension platform to ensure we continue to provide valuable project outcomes.

Please visit the  
**Project Catalyst website**  
for all the latest news  
and project information.

**PROJECT CATALYST  
WEBSITE**

Project videos are  
also available at  
**Project Catalyst's**  
YouTube Channel

**PROJECT CATALYST  
YOUTUBE CHANNEL**



Joseph Marano shows off his Project Catalyst sign - Innisfail

Thank you to all who have provided their valuable insights and ideas so far. We'll keep you up to date as strategies are developed and rolled out.

## Grower and Service Provider Visits

One of the most interesting and valuable aspects of Project Catalyst is working with so many different partners, service providers and growers, understanding their farming businesses and seeing the desire that drives you all to improve farming systems. Project Coordinator, Ross Neivandt will continue to visit and support Catalyst members so please contact him directly or speak to your service provider if

you would like to catchup in person or just have a chat. Ross will be travelling from the Mackay Whitsundays to the Burdekin and Wet Tropics again in November so please make contact if you wish.



### For further information, contact:

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