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## Giddy! Hello! Ciao! Bongu!

**SPRING IS IN THE AIR - literally!**

**If you suffer from allergies be aware of increased pollen levels this year.**

**We hope you are enjoying these quarterly communiqués, as much as we are  
enjoying creating them.**

***Got something to share?***

**Please send through your stories, trials, tribulations, or photos (like Frank has) to**

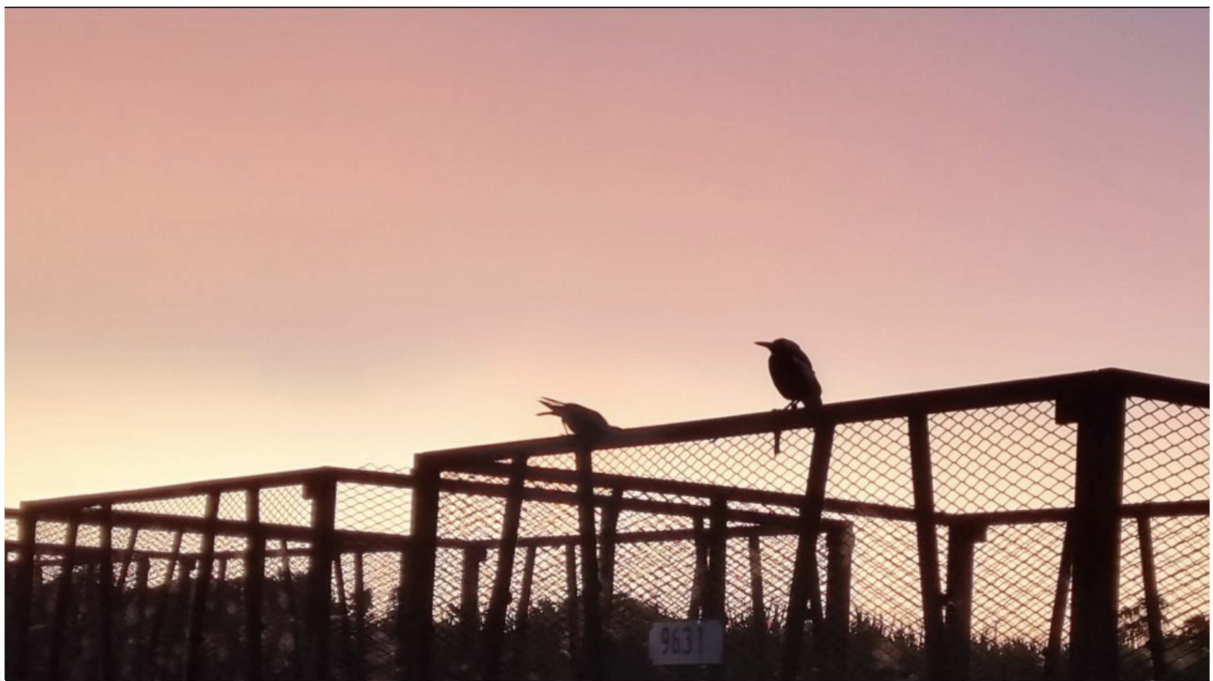
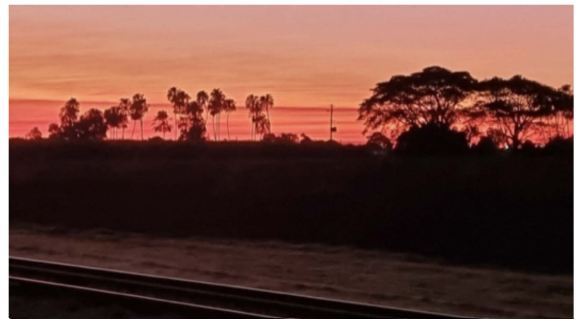
**[comms@projectcatalyst.net.au](mailto:comms@projectcatalyst.net.au) or connect with me (KimK) directly.**

**PS. make sure you add our new email address as a contact to ensure uninterrupted  
connection to information and invitations.**

**(Check your junk or spam folder for previous deliveries.)**

**GROWER CONTRIBUTIONS**

**PHOTOS by Frank Mugica**





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Project Catalyst grower Francesco (Frank) Mugica is so passionate about farming, he's taken to capturing stunning scenes from the Burdekin at sunrise, dusk, or dead of night and sharing them on social media. They're so good I invited him to submit some of his favourites for us to enjoy (above).

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Annette Corcoran also enjoys capturing moments with the Nutrien Ag Solutions team, this time she's been out in the paddock with John Simpson and his granddaughter, whom will benefit from his farming practice legacy. In fact the entire Mackay Region community stands to benefit.

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Further north in Ingham, Bethany Donker from Herbert Cane Productivity Services Limited, produced one of the most visually stunning updates on the project. With 51 farms covering 3.8k ha there is a significant area now being EM Mapped and 48% being fallowed under legumes - Congrats to the team.

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In our last edition we got to know Sharelle Polack, and why she loves working with WWF-Australia. In the Winter Edition I mentioned we'd follow up with Communications and Technical Officer, Richelle Kelly who shares Farmacist news. When she's not in the paddock with farmers (her favourite place to be), Richelle is writing clever content to share, and organising events. You can read all the latest from their Central and North Qld teams [here](#). Connect on FB!

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If you have a fear of missing out – don't delay connecting with us on [Facebook](#),



and [YouTube](#) where we've launched the Catalyst Video/Podcast series, we've completed #6 highlighting succession options for aspiring and retiring farmers! *(If you missed #5, it reveals two years of trial data with Alex and Mostafa - AutoWeed).*



# **Nutrien**<sup>®</sup>

## **Celebrating Grower Achievement**

John Simpson (Pictured above) was nominated by Nutrien Ag Solutions, for the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) - Reef Nutrient Steward Champion Award. QFF has recently notified John that he is a finalist for this award to be judged in Cairns this month (November).

John was recognised for his innovation and best management practices in reducing nutrient run-off and improved water quality from his farm. These farming practices contribute to reducing environmental effects, such as reducing the farms Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN) and fine sediment run-off.

With the support of Project Catalyst and Nutrien Ag Solutions, John has adopted beneficial and sustainable farming practice changes across the farm. With the focus being on improving the quality of water leaving the paddock and reducing environmental effects on the Great Barrier Reef by:

- Reducing Nitrogen application to all sugarcane ratoon blocks across his farms.
- Planting of legume crops to fallow blocks. The planting of legumes to fallow blocks can produce a significant source of Nitrogen for the subsequent plant crops, while protecting the soil surface from erosion, improving soil health, weed control and cane provide additional income from seed production.

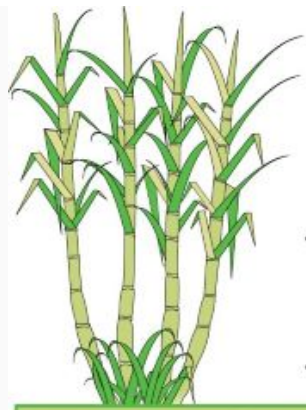
### **John's Current and Ongoing Achievements:**

- 2022 John recognised by Mackay Sugar for sugarcane growing excellence at the Productivity Awards for Mackay Area Productivity Services (MAPS) and Sugar Research Australia (SRA) Farm Research and Innovation.
- Accredited through Smartcane BMP. John continues his commitment to refining his farming practices, reducing nutrient run-off and improving water quality.
- John's commitment rewarded with approved funding for a cover crop planter.
- Supports and manages fields for SRA to conduct sugarcane variety trials and in the long term benefiting the Queensland Sugar Industry.
- Supports MAPS (Mackay Area Productivity Services) in allocating and maintaining fields for clean seed material, which is managed and made available to growers as a clean/disease free, source of plant material - the foundation of plant cane and future crops.

Annette Corcoran

Project Officer - Nutrien Ag Solutions

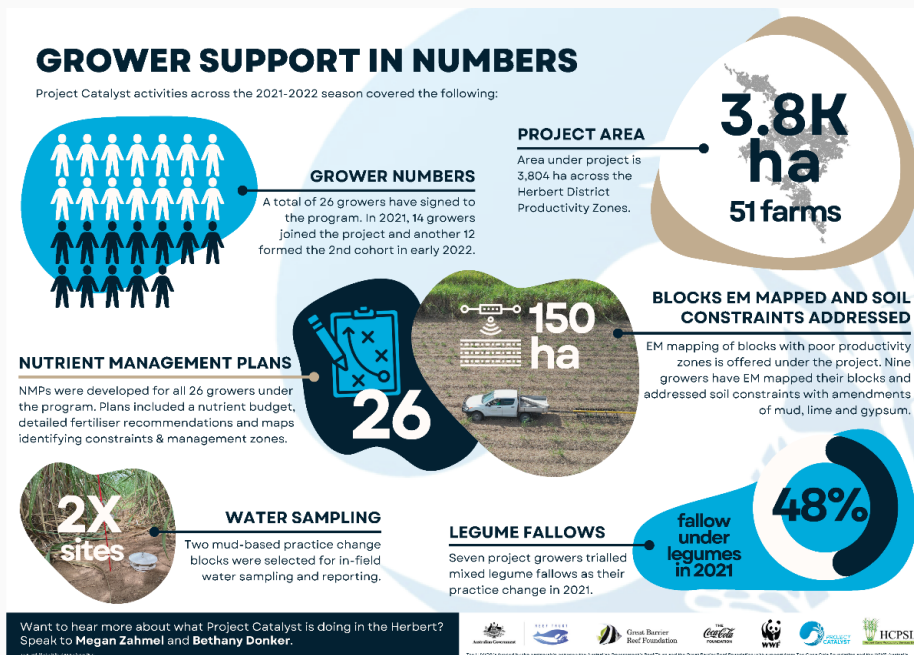
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# HCPSL

Herbert Cane Productivity Services Ltd.

The team at HCPSL are actively engaging with growers throughout the district. In a recent report to their Board, Bethany Donker produced these well designed posters to illustrate Catalyst progress. Well done to all!



## INNOVATION TRIALS

- VARIABLE RATE PHOSPHORUS**  
Strategically apply phosphorus where it is required as opposed to broad rate application of phosphorus to target and improve yield and profitability.
- MANAGING WEEDS SMARTER WITH DRONES**  
Using high resolution aerial imagery from Remotely Piloted Aircraft (drones) to map weed infestations in cane and to precisely apply different herbicide treatments to address infestations of weeds.
- ZONAL IMIDACLOPRID**  
Creating prescription maps for cane-grub-susceptible soil and applying imidacloprid through GPS rate controller to test if imidacloprid can control cane grubs without the traditional blanket application approach.
- 38%** Reduction of applied imidacloprid product.
- \$2,080** Estimated savings by zonally applying product.

This is a pilot project. The results of the trial will be used to inform the wider cane industry. The trial is a pilot project. The results of the trial will be used to inform the wider cane industry. The trial is a pilot project. The results of the trial will be used to inform the wider cane industry.



## *Introducing Richelle Kelly - Communications and Technical Officer*

### **Project Catalyst Team Profile**

Richelle Kelly – Farmacist, Burdekin Q

Known for its natural beauty and fertile farmland, Ayr in Queensland's North is part of the Burdekin Region, where many of our Project Catalyst growers conduct trials with our On Ground Service Providers. Agronomy services are crucial to qualify results of practice change adoption and Farmacist have been involved since 19 Mackay Whitsunday growers committed to the program in 2008.

The latest addition to the team is Communication and Technical Officer Richelle Kelly, who calls Ayr home. Born in a colourful decade of mullets, shoulder pads and 'big hair', she can appreciate how things have changed.

"I had a childhood that was full of adventures – camping for holidays, a whole farm to run around on – usually barefoot with my brother, and weekends spent riding horses and competing. I loved the freedom of being a farm kid (though you never realise at the time how lucky you are), and that I got to grow up in the 90s."

Richelle credits her parents as the greatest inspiration and influencers in her life. Never daunted by challenges, their kindness and constant support, allowed a young and spirited teen to follow her heart and pursue a career.

"I loved words and followed that to a degree in the Arts, majoring in communications. I wanted to be involved without necessarily being a journo, so I studied communications instead of journalism to give me a broader study range. I wanted to work in glossy magazines and with big colour features, but I graduated when magazines were starting to die off and the internet was ramping up, so I adapted and went into advertising and marketing roles."

Back on the farm Richelle became her father's offsider, (something she's extremely grateful she got to do) working alongside him for close to a decade until the farm was sold in 2021.

"I continued studying as well, picking up external courses focused on editing, proofreading, and publishing. When the farm sold, I saw Heidi (a Farmacist Agronomist) at a BBQ and she said they were looking for a comms person. I started the next week. I feel like I hit the jackpot because I can combine the practical agricultural knowledge from farming, with my Uni degree, and talk about weather, dirt and farming all day."

Managing two roles is proving quite hectic, with communications dominating much of Richelle's time over the past year designing, marketing, and organising events, there's now regular newsletters, social media, and fact sheets. When asked about how she liked to spend her spare time, this response prefaced an answer - (I don't understand this question )

"I like to spend time with my family and friends, my horses and dogs, coffee, books, and Netflix. Any of these on a rainy day is even better. For any longer periods of spare time, I like to see new places and do new things."

With a great sense of humour and love of the great outdoors, the future is open for this talented woman, whom you'll learn has an adventurous spirit that longs for cooler climes.



How much do you know about managing pests in the paddock?

Actively sharing knowledge with a wider audience is our focus through the website, Facebook page and newsletter. This article from Billie garnered quite a bit of attention in a recent publication.

Do you have a topic you'd like to know more about? Get in touch with us and we'll see how we can help.

For more information, and to see what else Farmacist has been up to lately, see our latest newsletter at [farmacist.com.au/resources](http://farmacist.com.au/resources), or email [info@farmacist.com.au](mailto:info@farmacist.com.au).



## SOFT VS HARD CHEMISTRY

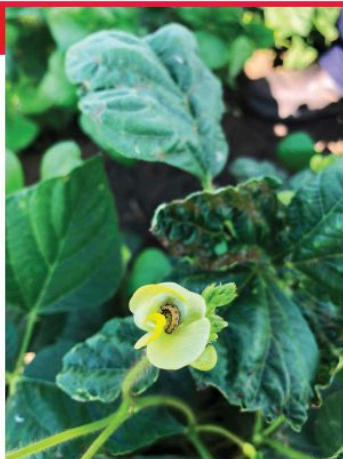
By Billie White

Sometimes when agronomists are talking about pesticide choices, they'll refer to soft and hard chemistry/pesticides. But what do we actually mean when we say soft chemistry?

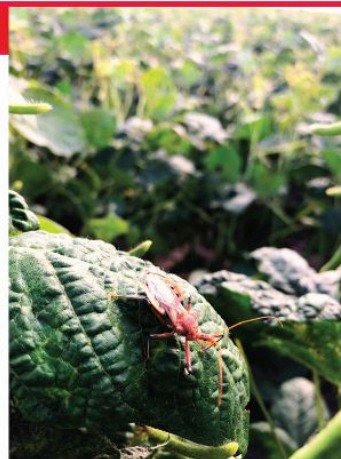
Soft insecticides are also known as selective insecticides – they target a specific species or family of insect. A great example of this is Chlorantraniliprole or Vantacor™, a widely used insecticide applied to kill caterpillar pests, such as *Heliothis* or *Helicoverpa*. An example of a hard, or broad-spectrum, insecticide is Deltamethrin or Decis Options™. This insecticide will kill all the insects in the crop – pests and beneficials alike.

"Start soft" is a common saying when considering a pest management plan. When utilising integrated pest management (IPM) in your cropping system, one thing you're aiming to maintain is a healthy population of beneficial and predatory insects. This helps reduce pest pressure and reduce the number of insecticide applications required. When pest insects go above the recommended thresholds, it's time to choose and spray an insecticide. By starting off with selective, softer chemistry early on, you give the beneficial and predatory populations a chance to survive and continue their role in pest control. Having a predatory insect population helps buffer the rate of pest population growth following an insecticide application.

Applying broad spectrum insecticides can cause certain pest populations to flair due to no predatory insects to help control their numbers. Sometimes pest pressure and insecticide choices only allow for a broad-spectrum insecticide to be applied – but choosing selective insecticides early and following recommended thresholds allows you to keep those chemicals as back up later in the crop! 🌱



Chlorantraniliprole (Vantacor™) is a systemic insecticide that targets caterpillar pests such as these.



This assassin bug was found in the same paddock, 7 days after being sprayed with Chlorantraniliprole (Vantacor™)





Great Barrier  
Reef Foundation



## Catalyst News

Project Catalyst continues to deliver great results in our Practice Change adoption programs and is working with 66 growers across the Mackay Whitsundays, Burdekin and Wet Tropics regions. Recent highlights include the release of the Mackay Whitsunday Legume and Mixed Species Fallow Cropping Guide which compliments a similar booklet produced for the Herbert region a few years back.

A copy of the guide is available on the Project Catalyst website at the following link:

<https://www.projectcatalyst.net.au/files/2022/06/CATCHMENT-SOLUTIONS-fallow-legume-crops-MKY-WHIT-broch-low-res.pdf>

Based on actual practice changes adopted by current project growers, P2R Projector shows that our current progress is:

Mackay Whitsunday Water Quality Improvement Program

Funded by: The Great Barrier Reef Foundation

On-Ground Service Provider: Nutrien Ag Solutions (Mackay)

Number of growers: 24

Hectares of farmland: 4,321 ha

And according to P2R Projector:

DIN saving: 7,985 kilograms

Lower Herbert Water Quality Improvement Program

Funded by: The Great Barrier Reef Foundation

On-Ground Service Provider: HCPSL

Number of growers: 24

Hectares of farmland: 4,044 ha

And according to P2R Projector:

DIN saving: 48,269 kilograms

Coca-Cola Practice Change Program

Funded by: The Coca-Cola Foundation

On-Ground Service Provider: Nutrien Ag Solutions (Mackay & Ayr), Farmacist & Burdekin Productivity Services

Number of growers: 18

Hectares of farmland: 4,364 ha

And according to P2R Projector:

DIN saving: 887 kilograms

Project Catalyst also presented on its Mackay Whitsunday and Lower Herbert projects at the GBRF's Regional Water Quality Showcase Workshop in Townsville. James Cook University's TropWATER group ran the 2-day workshop to bring GBRF projects together, learn about the water quality aspects of these projects, explore ways to add value and enhance the delivery of water quality improvement information of growers, stakeholders and the community.

Our project has also produced 6 podcasts and posted numerous articles on social media and it's great to see the very positive responses and the number of people viewing our work continues to grow.

Please let Kim Kleidon know if you have anything to share.  
You never know, you might end up starring in your own podcast.

Ross Neivandt

Project Catalyst Coordinator

Principal Scientist

Catchment Solutions



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comms@projectcatalyst.net.au

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