



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

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Press release

Knowledge is profit: Informed farmers make more money

Sir Francis Bacon famously wrote that “Knowledge is power”. Now the results of a study of landholders on the Atherton Tablelands of north Queensland show that knowledge is also profit – informed farmers tend to make more money.

The survey of rural landholders demonstrated that those who actively sought information about how to best manage their properties and businesses were more likely to be profitable than others.

“These knowledge-seeking landholders also tend to access many different sources of information, compared to those who do not have profitable enterprises,” said Dr Nick Emtage, the University of Queensland-based researcher who was funded by the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) and Terrain NRM Pty Ltd to conduct the Wet Tropics Sustainable Agriculture Survey in 2004/5 and analyse the data.

“Profitable, knowledge-seeking landholders are also significantly more likely to have attended short courses about land management and to have developed a business plan for their properties,” he added.

The good news for Wet Tropics landholders seeking to become more informed and profitable is that a range of short courses in best-practice land management are now available through Terrain NRM Pty Ltd, thanks to the Caring for our Country – Reef Rescue initiative.

Dr Allan Dale, CEO of Terrain, said that Dr Emtage’s work was a timely reminder that there were many different types of land managers in the Wet Tropics. “So there’s no single tool that will be effective in improving the flow of information to everyone. This research has particularly helped us think about how we support land managers in the roll-out of the Reef Rescue program in this region,” he said.

Former Babinda banana farmer Sheriden Morris, who is currently Managing Director of the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), was unsurprised at the survey’s findings.

“In any enterprise, the more information you have, the more likely it is you’re going to make better decisions,” she said. “The interesting thing about this survey is the apparent link between informed decision-making and actual profitability of these businesses.”

The RRRC is the north Queensland-based company that administers the \$40 million MTSRF on behalf of the Australian Government.

The MTSRF does not fund research for research’s sake. Instead, it focuses on using science to help increase the sustainability of management and use of north Queensland’s key environmental assets: the Great Barrier Reef, the Wet Tropics rainforests, and the Torres Strait.

“The RRRRC is all about increasing the amount of useful information available to north Queenslanders,” added Sheriden. “By freely sharing information, and by actively generating new knowledge where needed, we increase our ability to make good decisions - and then we all profit.”

Dr Emtage is one of around 100 researchers presenting their latest results at the 2009 Annual MTSRF Conference, from 28th-30th April, at the Rydges Southbank Hotel, in Townsville. The conference is free and attendance by all knowledge-seekers, including the general public, is encouraged. Please see the conference website for more details: http://www.rrrc.org.au/news/2009_conference.html

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For more information about the **Reef and Rainforest Research Centre**,
or the **Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility**,
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