

Farming Future Research

Researchers conducting the first ever representative survey of the region's farmers expect feedback will paint a more accurate picture of the progress landholders are making toward better farming practices.

University of Queensland researcher Nick Emtage says that as the stewards of much of our regional landscapes, many landholders have already made significant voluntary improvements to the way they farm. The need now is to find out how to better support the activities in the future.

"The feedback will help demonstrate that rural landholders do care deeply about their local environment in contrast to the way they are sometimes portrayed. There are many examples of farmers working to improve water quality and the health of the reef, managing native vegetation for biodiversity values and climate change," Dr Emtage said.

"It's important we know what information, financial or other incentives, and other types of support are needed to continue this momentum. We need broad industry involvement to make sure we capture the breadth of perspectives," Dr Emtage said,

With the help of representatives of agriculture industries and lobby groups to design the survey, the project is a partnership between the University of Queensland and Terrain NRM, the region's community natural resource management organisation.

Terrain currently runs various incentive and assistance programs to help rural landholders. Terrain's sustainable industries unit manager, John Reghenzani, highlights a devolved grants program for producers, eco-accreditation and new biodiversity and carbon credits schemes.

"In the past 3 years, over 136 property owners have accessed \$671,000 in grants to boost almost M\$2 of their own contribution to equipment, infrastructure or expertise for practice change. Also, the eco-accreditation schemes will help landholders to gain premium prices for products that are produced with the least impact on the environment. The support goes some way to rewarding on-farm changes that benefit the broader community and help reduce the costs of change," he said.

Information gathered will also be used to update the region's NRM plan. The plan identifies the major risks facing the health of the region's environmental and economic resources and outlines solutions for their sustainable management. Funding for the research is being provided by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources through the Marine and Tropical Science Research Facility.

Further information can be obtained from Nick Emtage (UQ) – 0427 192 906 or John Reghenzani (Terrain NRM) – 0439 670 893