



Improved irrigation system selection and operation for increased sugarcane productivity and profitability.

1. What is the project about?

This project aims to improve the capability of growers and extension staff to use irrigation information and tools and make cost effective irrigation decisions through on farm demonstration.

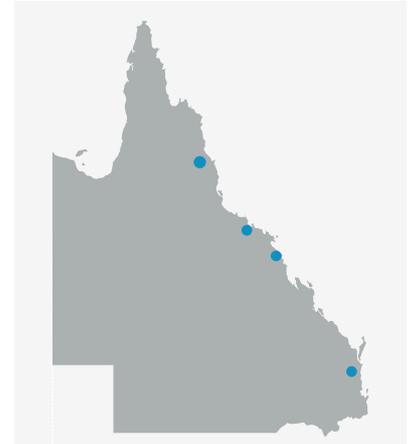
Working with sugar producers, advisors and researchers the project team have established irrigation innovation hubs across four sugarcane regions:

Tablelands Region: Tablelands/Mareeba

Northern Region: Burdekin (BRIA and Delta)

Central Region: Mackay/Sarina; Proserpine)

Southern region: Childers; Bundaberg; Maryborough



2. Why do irrigators need to know about it?

Irrigation management is critical to the profitability and economic sustainability of Australia's 166,000ha of irrigated sugarcane. The link between water and crop productivity is more direct and more predictable than for other environmental variables.

Irrigation decisions are complex. Factors such as yield response to irrigation, water availability, energy and water costs all impact financial viability. Energy can be a major cost and is impacting irrigation equipment purchases and operating decisions.

In both fully and supplementary irrigated regions, previous research found irrigation practices can be significantly improved and are often sub-optimal due to lack of understanding of irrigation principles and economic return.



3. How will the research benefit irrigators?

Irrigators will benefit though:

- Improved understanding of irrigation system selection, operation and management for increased sugarcane productivity and profitability.
- Better awareness of and implementation of existing irrigation technology and management options including technical irrigation system aspects, productivity and economic trade-offs and risk issues.
- Access to irrigation "innovation hubs" which form a platform for ongoing irrigation innovation and improvement.
- New knowledge, resources and ready reckoners to support adoption of better irrigation practice across the industry.

4. Key results to date

Operational plans have been developed and several workshops and training sessions held. Strategies to collect and analyse data for irrigation system assessment and benchmarking have been developed and are being rolled out.

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