



**Cairns Post**  
**Wednesday 24/02/2016**

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# Growers cut use of chemicals

## **KIMBERLEY VLASIC**

FAR North cane farmers are continuing to defy claims they are Reef wreckers as they trial innovative ideas that are drastically reducing herbicide and fertiliser run-off.

Mario Raccanello is one of 78 Queensland growers involved in Project Catalyst, which aims to reduce the environmental impacts of sugarcane production on the Great Barrier Reef.

He is trialling bio-fertilisers at his 370ha farm near Tully in a bid to improve soil health, while cutting down on chemicals.

So far, the results have been promising with the first crop harvested showing no loss in production despite a 50 per cent reduction in fertiliser.

“We think outside the square ... we’re looking at different challenges and different ways of approaching farming techniques,” said Mr Raccanello.

Project Catalyst growers have conducted trials covering more than 20,000ha of land and improved run-off and drainage water quality of an estimated 150 billion litres.

“There’s a bit of an image that they’re all bad and doing the wrong thing and don’t want to change but the reality is the majority of farmers in the Wet Tropics in the past eight years have changed their practices for the better,” said Terrain Natural Resource Management chief executive Carole Sweatman.

**Read more in Rural Insight, page 23**



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**RAPID RESULTS:** Cane grower Mario Raccanello is one of 78 Queensland farmers involved in Project Catalyst. He's trialling bio-fertilisers at his 370ha farm near Tully to improve soil health and water quality.

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