

REEF WATER QUALITY

Program



Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions Banana requirements

The Reef protection regulations address land-based sources of water pollution flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. This includes agricultural and **industrial sources** of nutrient and sediment pollution from all six **Reef regions** – Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary.

Why are the regulations required?

Rainfall, leaching and irrigation run-off can wash nutrients and sediment from the land into waterways and coastal wetlands which flow to the Great Barrier Reef. The requirements for banana cultivation focus on retaining nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment on-farm to minimise run-off and improve water quality.

What are the requirements for banana cultivation?

Banana growers in the Reef regions need to:

- comply with the standard conditions in the **Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard for banana cultivation***, including to follow the **Prescribed methodology for banana cultivation**
- obtain an environmental authority (permit) before **starting, expanding or relocating banana growing**.

*In the Cape York region, the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard for banana cultivation only applies to land where a grower has an environmental authority (permit) for commercial cropping and horticulture.

The standard conditions in the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard are often referred to as 'minimum practice standards', including as an action under the **Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan**.

There are requirements for agricultural advisers, such as agronomists and fertiliser sellers, when providing tailored advice about matters covered by the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standards.

For more information, please refer to the **Record keeping requirements for agricultural advisers factsheet**.

Where can I find more information?

The standard, methodology, guides and other factsheets are available online or by registering to receive an information pack:

Web: www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Email: ESReef@des.qld.gov.au

Telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

What do I need to do to comply with the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard?

To comply with the standard, banana growers need to:

- minimise sediment loss to waterways where there is a high risk of soil loss from the farm by having appropriate erosion and sediment control measures in places
- ensure fallow blocks have adequate covered ground at appropriate times in the banana crop cycle
- ensure inter-rows on plant blocks have at least 60% covered ground before 1 November (wet season) (unless undertaking renovation works)
- ensure inter-rows on ratoon blocks have at least 60% covered ground (unless undertaking renovation works)
- make and keep records
- either keep the annual amount of nitrogen and phosphorus within the levels stated in the table below, or develop a nutrient management plan with an appropriate person prior to applying fertiliser, using the [Prescribed methodology for banana cultivation](#).

Crop stage	Nitrogen	Phosphorus
Plant	280 kg/ha/year	60 kg/ha/year
Ratoon	400 kg/ha/year	60 kg/ha/year

For full details of the requirements, please refer to the [Agricultural Environmentally Relevant standard for banana cultivation](#) and the [Prescribed methodology for banana cultivation](#).

For more guidance on how to comply, please refer to the [Erosion and sediment control guide](#) and [Fertiliser placement guide](#).

Records

Banana growers must make and keep records to demonstrate activities being undertaken on the property are in accordance with the standard conditions.

For full details of the requirements, see the [Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard for banana cultivation](#).

Records can be in any format but must be made within three business days and kept for at least six years.

Records need to be made available for inspection when requested by an authorised person such as a compliance officer from the Department of Environment and Science. These records will be assessed to determine compliance with the standard conditions.

Information collected by the Queensland Government can only be collected, stored and used in accordance with the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#).

What do I need to do if I'm starting, expanding or relocating banana growing?

Growers may need to obtain an environmental authority (permit) before starting, expanding or relocating banana growing in a Reef region if the activity will be on five hectares or more of land that does not have a cropping history.

A cropping history is when the land has been used for cropping or horticultural activities in at least three out of the past 10 years. There are transitional provisions that allow some extra time to develop a cropping history for any cropping that has only started in the three years prior to 1 June 2021.

There is a handy [checklist](#) to work out if you need a permit and more detailed information available in the [Application Guide](#) and [frequently asked questions](#).

Banana growers who are relocating due to TR4 Panama disease will only need to apply for a standard environmental authority regardless of the size of the new cropping activity.

Once you have a permit, you must comply with all the conditions on the permit. These conditions will require you to design and establish measures that minimise fine sediment and dissolved inorganic nitrogen from the new areas entering waterways.

You must also comply with the standard conditions in the [Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard for banana cultivation](#).

For information on how to apply for a permit, please refer to the [New cropping and horticulture factsheet](#).

How does compliance work?

The Department of Environment and Science assesses compliance with the Reef protection regulations.

For more information, please refer to the [Compliance factsheet](#).

Recognised accreditation programs and acknowledged practice change projects

The Queensland Department of Environment and Science can recognise producers who participate in programs and projects that align to, or achieve more than, the requirements in the Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard. These producers can be identified as a lower priority for compliance inspections under the Reef protection regulations.

For information on the benefits of being involved, please refer to the [Recognised accreditation programs and acknowledged practice change projects factsheet](#).

What other support is available?

Other programs and support tools are provided by the Australian and Queensland governments and industry organisations to help banana growers identify opportunities to improve farming practices.

For more information, visit the Queensland Government's Business Queensland website at www.business.qld.gov.au and search 'Land management for banana farmers'.