

Guide to using the agricultural efficiency code

Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Code
Managing clearing to improve operational efficiency of existing agriculture

Effective 21 June 2019

CS8267

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About this guide

This guide has been developed to help landholders operate under the Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Code: Clearing to improve agricultural efficiency. It refers to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and the *Planning Act 2016* (Planning Act), which jointly regulate the clearing of native vegetation in Queensland.

The guide is not intended to be exhaustive. It only deals with operating under the agricultural efficiency code. It provides supplementary information, and is designed to be read in conjunction with the agricultural efficiency code, and with the *General guide to accepted development vegetation clearing codes* (which provides information about the notification process, landholder obligations, and technical information that applies to all codes).

Landholders are also encouraged to familiarise themselves with the local, state and federal Acts and Regulations that apply to their operations.

Common abbreviations used in this document

- Act = *Vegetation Management Act 1999*
- Code = Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Code
- DNRME = Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Agricultural efficiency code = Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Code: Clearing to Improve Agricultural Efficiency
- RE = Regional Ecosystem

Further information

For more information call **135 VEG (135 834)**
email vegetation@dnrme.qld.gov.au
or search 'Vegetation Management' on www.qld.gov.au

Links to other documents

[Accepted development vegetation clearing codes](#)

[General guide to accepted development vegetation clearing codes](#)

Clearing for agricultural efficiency

The current Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Code: Clearing to improve agricultural efficiency (the agricultural efficiency code) became effective on 21 June 2019.

TIP *Any notification under the previous code (dated 2 December 2013) is no longer valid and you must notify the department before undertaking further clearing for agricultural efficiency.*

Scope

The agricultural efficiency code applies to any of the following:

- freehold land
- indigenous land
- leasehold land granted under the *Land Act 1994* (Land Act) for agricultural and grazing purposes
- land subject of an occupation licence under *the Land Act 1994*.

The agricultural efficiency code does not apply to:

- Land tenures that are not freehold, indigenous land or leasehold land granted under the Land Act for agricultural and grazing purposes.
- Clearing that is inconsistent with a condition of a development approval that remains enforceable.
- Clearing for which an approval is otherwise required under the Planning Act, such as a material change of use approval.
- Clearing in an endangered regional ecosystem or an of concern regional ecosystem.

The agricultural efficiency code authorises clearing in Category B areas (remnant vegetation), and Category C areas and Category R areas (regulated regrowth vegetation).

What is clearing to improve agricultural efficiency?

Clearing to improve agricultural efficiency is clearing to:

- straighten edges or margins of an existing cropped area
- provide for installation of irrigation systems or maximising efficiencies of existing irrigation systems, within or adjacent to an existing cropped area.

Improving operational efficiency is not for:

- minor expansion of the agricultural area
- the removal of fragments, patches or islands of native vegetation within a cropped area.

For an area to be considered an '**existing cropped area**' under the agricultural efficiency code it must be an area that has been cropped or harvested for annual or perennial horticulture or broad-acre cropping at least three times in the 10 year period prior to notifying under the agricultural efficiency code.

'**Horticulture**' is the commercial cultivation of plants for harvesting including fruit (e.g. berries, grapes and nuts), vegetables, flowers, stems, roots or leaves, and commercial cultivation of turf grass species for turf harvesting.

'Broad-acre cropping' is the commercial cultivation and harvest of:

- sugar cane and tea
- plants for oil - such as canola, mustard and sunflower
- plants for fibre - such as cotton and hemp
- cereal or pseudo cereal plants (including any forage varieties) - such as wheat, rice barley, oats, rye, chia, triticale, sorghum, quinoa, maize and millets
- pulses or leguminous plants - such as lupins, chickpeas, cowpea, faba beans, field peas, mung beans, navy beans, soybeans, lentils, peanuts, guar, dolichos and lucerne.



Broad-acre cropping does not include growing pasture to be grazed by livestock.

Notification limitations

Prior to conducting any clearing to improve the operational efficiency of an existing cropped area, you must notify DNRME, there is no notification fee.

A notification is limited to a single lot. If your property consists of more than one lot, you may lodge a notification for each lot and a notification remains in effect for two years from the date of confirmation. DNRME will send you a confirmation receipt of the notification with an identification number.

When notifying, you will need to specify the size of the area you intend to clear (in hectares).

If your property is sold, the new landowner must notify DNRME if they wish to improve the operational efficiency of an existing cropped area, within the clearing limits specified in section 4.2 of the code.

Clearing for improved agricultural efficiency area limits

Section 4.2 (2) of the agricultural efficiency code limits clearing to all of the following:

- 5 hectares in category B areas under this or the superseded code in total
- 1 hectare in category R areas
- 10 hectares of category B areas, category C areas or category R areas in total under the current or the superseded code.

Area clearing limits apply to the lot and include clearing by a former landholder. Accordingly, if a landholder or a former landholder has cleared to the above area limits on a lot under the current or the superseded agricultural efficiency code, then no further notifications can be made under the agricultural efficiency code.

Example: You have an existing cropped area that does not have straight edges — there is native vegetation which prevents your irrigation equipment from evenly distributing water across the cropped area — and you did not clear under the superseded code.

The native vegetation you would like to clear to improve agricultural efficiency is comprised of 2 hectares of a category B area, 5 hectares of a category C area and 0.5 hectares of a category R area. Because the proposed clearing is less than 5 hectares in the category B area, less than 1 hectare in the category R area and less than 10 hectares in combined total, if you comply with all other requirements of this code, you may clear to straighten the edge of the existing cropped area.

Clearing practices

Section 4 of the agricultural efficiency code deals with clearing practices, and includes:

- operational efficiency (section 4.1)
- clearing limits (section 4.2)
- soil and water quality protections (section 4.3).

Operational efficiency – straightening edges or margins

Clearing to straighten edges or margins means the removal of vegetation along edges or margins that are uneven (jagged) or irregularly shaped and that protrude into the existing cropped area and increase the complexity or cost of production. Boundaries do not have to be absolutely regular or square but rather just straightened to be worked efficiently.

In most cases the north east corner of Diagram 1 cannot be cleared under this code, because the shape of this area is not an impediment to the efficient working of most operations.

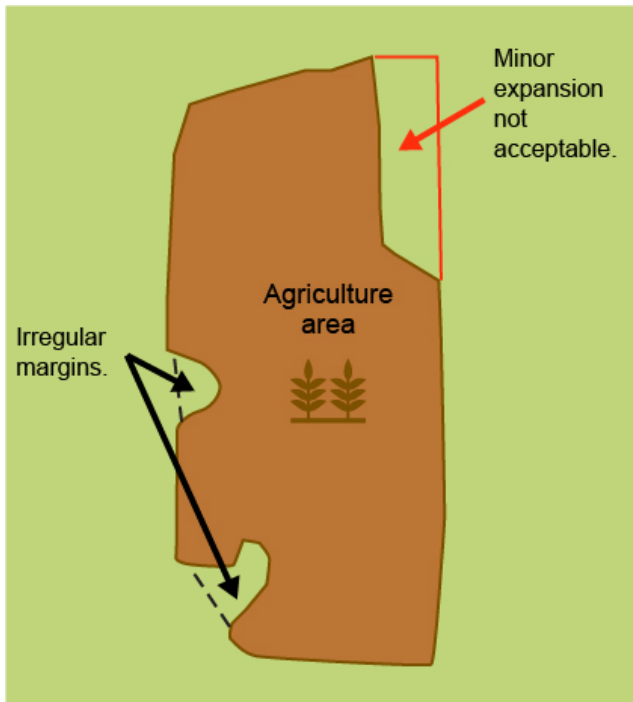


Diagram 1: Operational efficiency

Where a landholder intends straightening an edge, only the minimum amount of vegetation that removes the intrusion into and out of the cropped area can be cleared. Diagram 2 shows an example of the vegetation that can be cleared under the code. The vegetation that is intruding can be cleared, as this will improve operational efficiency. Clearing that is beyond straightening the edge and expands the cropped area is not consistent with this code.

While straightening an edge may increase the total area of cropping to a minor extent, the primary purpose of the clearing must be improving efficiency of the existing cropped area by reducing production costs.

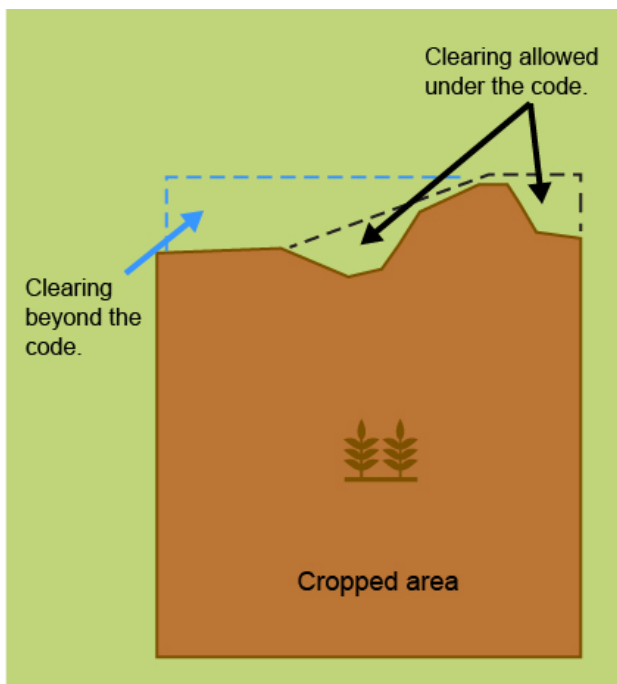


Diagram 2: Edge straightening

The vegetation shown in Diagram 3 cannot be cleared under the code, as the edges of the cropped area are straight.

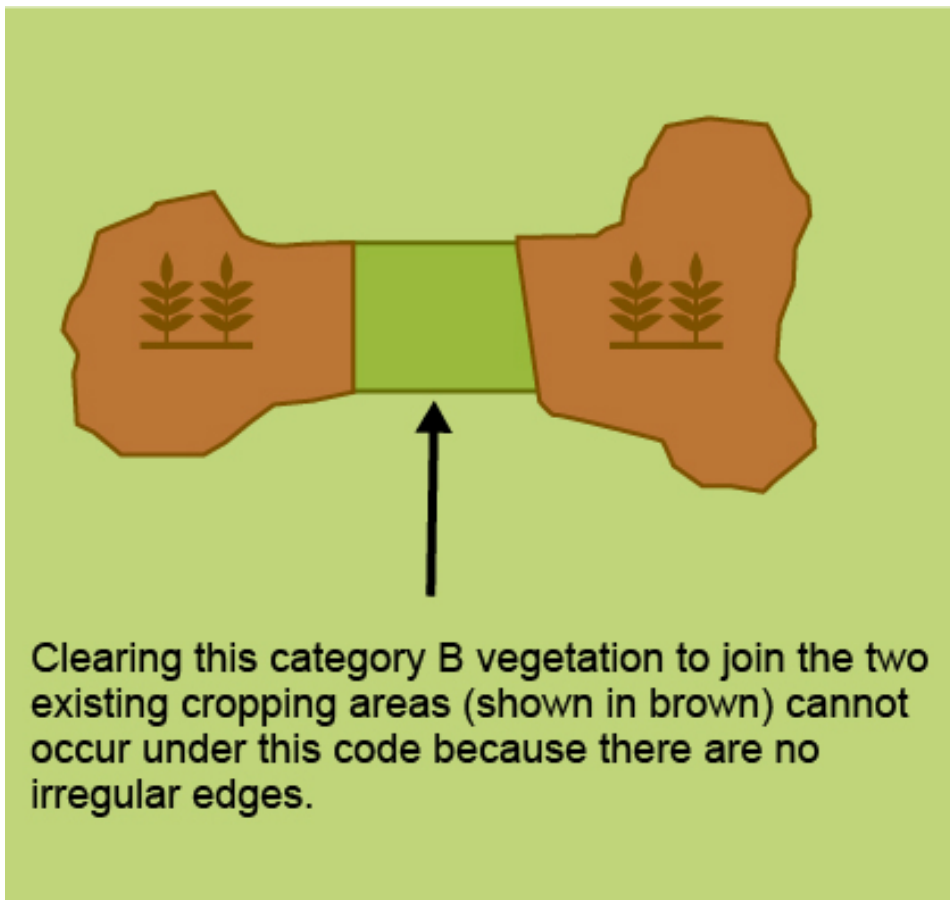


Diagram 3: Crop extension

Operational efficiency – irrigation systems

The agricultural efficiency code also permits clearing to provide for installation of irrigation systems or maximising efficiencies of existing irrigation systems, within or adjacent to existing cropped areas. This includes flood, sprinkle, drip and micro irrigation.

Example: You have an existing cropped area that is irrigated by a centre pivot. The most efficient position for the centre pivot was adjacent to least concern remnant vegetation. The adjacent remnant vegetation however has only allowed the pivot to rotate 180°. If some of the adjacent vegetation is cleared, maximum efficiency of the irrigation system could be achieved by the centre pivot rotating 270°. This adjacent vegetation is not essential habitat, is not an island under the agricultural efficiency code and is not within 100 metres of a riparian area. In these circumstances, clearing necessary to allow the centre pivot to rotate 270° to maximised efficiencies of the irrigation system would be permitted under the agricultural efficiency code.

Clearing limitations

Section 4.2 of the agricultural efficiency code applies a range of clearing limitations. The following information provides general information only for some of these limitations. Landholders should refer to the full list of limitations contained in the agricultural efficiency code.

Section 4.2 (1) prohibits clearing in:

- endangered regional ecosystems
- of concern regional ecosystems
- essential habitat
- riparian protection zones specified in Table 1 below
- islands of vegetation within the cropped area.


 *For further information on regional ecosystems and vegetation management mapping, see Part 2 of the General guide to accepted development vegetation clearing codes.*


Table 1: Riparian protection zones

Water feature	Riparian protection zone*
Wetland	100 metres
Water course and drainage features	
Stream order† 1 or 2	10 metres
Stream order† 3 or 4	25 metres
Stream order† 5 or more	50 metres

Note:

*The riparian protection zone includes the area between the defining banks of the watercourse, drainage feature or wetland, plus the specified distance measured from the defining bank away from the water body.

† Stream order is shown on the vegetation management supporting map.

 *For further information on wetlands, watercourses and drainage features, see Part 3 of the General guide to accepted development vegetation clearing codes.*

Clearing in islands

An island is any mapped regulated vegetation (any combination of category A, B, C, or R vegetation) that is less than 10 hectares in size and is further than 200 metres from any other regulated vegetation. This includes islands that are within or straddle lot boundaries. Islands provide significant ecological value as stepping stones for native fauna. The agricultural efficiency code does not permit clearing of islands.

The vegetation shown in Diagram 4 cannot be cleared under the code. Although the vegetation is on the edge of each lot and removal would improve operational efficiency, the vegetation joining all four lots together creates an island and therefore for each lot the vegetation will be assessed as separate islands.

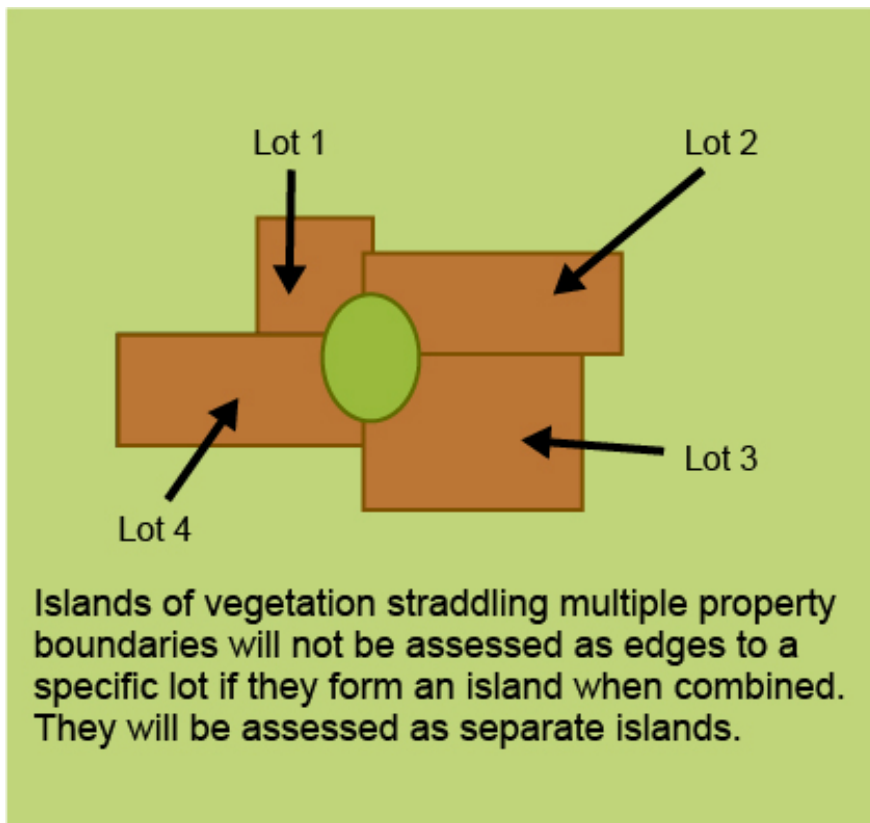


Diagram 4: Island of vegetation

Essential habitat

Essential habitat is the habitat of native wildlife prescribed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as endangered, vulnerable or near-threatened (protected wildlife). See [General guide to accepted development vegetation clearing codes](#) for more information on how to identify essential habitat. The agricultural efficiency code does not permit clearing in areas mapped as essential habitat.

Soil and water quality protections

Soil and water quality protections are covered in section 4.4 of the fodder code. Please see [General guide to accepted development vegetation clearing codes](#) for further information on protections for soil and water quality.