

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 1703
Asked on Wednesday, 12 November 2008

MR FOLEY asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent Reef Summit in Brisbane and reports in the media attributed to the Premier regarding the use of best practice farming methods—

- (1) Which farming methods are used by departmental staff to ensure sediments and chemicals do not wash away and enter the marine environment?
- (2) How many tonnes of chemical fertiliser of all categories has the Queensland Forestry Department used on its coastal pine plantations over the last 20 years?
- (3) Were the pollutants now found offshore caused by his department's chemicals?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) maintains a strong environmental sustainability ethic in delivering 'Profitable Primary Industries for Queensland'.

DPI&F staff have actively contributed to the development of key documents that underpinned the Premier's statements at the Reef Summit on 24 October 2008. These include the *2007 Water Quality Report - Great Barrier Reef catchments and inshore ecosystems* and the *Scientific Consensus Statement on water quality in the Great Barrier Reef*.

The combined impact of DPI&F sites represents less than 0.2 percent of land used for agriculture and grazing within the Reef catchment.

These sites are compliant with existing legislative requirements. More importantly, the activities undertaken at a number of these sites revolve around the trialling and continuous improvement of best management practices supporting the profitability, productivity and environmental performance of Queensland's agri-business sector. There is inherent variance in the specific management practices implemented at each site, particularly those designed to minimise the loss of sediments, chemicals and nutrients. As such, a full list of management practices for each institution is not readily available at this time.

DPI&F has recently initiated an internal audit to ensure its research and production facilities have in place environmental risk management protocols to a standard commensurate with those likely to be expected of producers operating in the Reef catchments. The resulting property management plans for each facility will align with the commodity specific management practice frameworks developed by Government, Industry and Community partnerships under the auspices of the Australian Government's Water Quality Improvement Plans and Reef Rescue Plan initiatives.

The property management plans will address the following core principles: input efficiencies; pollutant source controls and transmission processes; appropriate

treatment of discharge; record keeping; staff training and development; and monitoring and evaluation linked to a continuous improvement cycle. The review exercise is expected to be completed in January 2009.

Forestry Plantations Queensland (FPQ), the commercial manager of the State's plantation assets, regularly undertakes an independent audit and certification of its Sustainable Forest Management system to the internationally recognised Australian Forestry Standard AS 4708 – 2007. The Standard supports continuous improvement in sustainable forest management.

- (2) The offsite impacts of FPQ's operations are assessed via a network of stream monitoring stations located throughout its major plantation areas.

Detailed information on fertiliser use on coastal pine plantations over the last 20 years for the entire period is not readily available. However, based on information available for the seven-year period to June 2008, fertilizer levels are several orders of magnitude lower than those typically used in intensive agriculture.

- (3) The DPI&F and FPQ do not undertake offshore chemical monitoring. However, a four-year study of land use impacts on water quality in the Cardwell forestry area found that plantation forests actually enhanced water quality at some sites, with water flowing from the plantations being cleaner than the water flowing into them.