

Question on Notice

No. 1075

Asked on Wednesday, 15 September 2021

MR S O'CONNOR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND YOUTH AFFAIRS (HON M SCANLON)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister detail how the Department of Environment and Science recognises growers who have completed a BMP accredited program, including (a) how many are on the register of accreditation, (b) what percentage of total growers this accounts for and (c) whether the department views the completion of one of the accredited programs as a sufficient alternative to following all aspects of the reef regulations under the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

Under Chapter 5A, Part 5A of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (the Act), third party accreditation and certification programs such as industry Best Management Practice (BMP) programs can apply to be a recognised accreditation program in relation to the minimum practice standards under the Reef Regulations for a period of up to five years.

The Department of Environment and Science has received applications from and recognised two programs to date. These are:

- Smartcane BMP program for sugarcane growers (expiry April 2025); and
- Freshcare Environmental Program Reef Assured category for commercial banana growers (expiry March 2026).

Under section 318YE of the Act, recognised programs are required to hold a register of accredited landholders and provide this annually to the Government.

Smartcane BMP, under transitional provisions in the Act, is not required to provide this information in this recognition period. However, CANEGROWERS has sought the consent of growers to voluntarily supply their details to the register. As of 17 September 2021, the number of cane enterprises on the register is 136 of 633 accredited growers under the Smartcane BMP. This is estimated as 3.78 per cent of growers in the industry.

The number of banana growing enterprises on the register is 63 of 63 accredited growers under the Freshcare Environmental Program. This is estimated as 24.23 per cent of the industry in the Wet Tropics and Cape York region.

Section 318YD of the Act sets out criteria for recognition of accreditation programs covering their governance, procedures and control that delivers the key functions and requirements under the Act.

Smartcane BMP and Freshcare Environmental Program were granted recognition on the basis that they have standards that are consistent with, or better than, the minimum practice agricultural standards under section 318YB of the Act. Producers who are accredited under these programs are deemed to have met the minimum practice agricultural standards through an industry supported pathway.

The Act does not allow for the recognition of accredited programs in relation to the requirements to obtain an environmental authority for new or expanded cropping or horticulture.