

Commodity In Focus: Macadamias

Horticulture is playing a positive role in reducing the impact of farming management practices on water quality in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). Growers' commitment to participating in Growcom's best management practice (BMP) program, Hort360, and becoming Reef Certified has been key to this achievement.

Reef Certification is a voluntary, credible certification pathway for horticulture growers to demonstrate stewardship and industry best practice standards in the GBR catchments. Grower participation in this initiative is crucial to:

1. reducing pollutants such as fine sediment, pesticides and nutrients from leaving the farm and entering waterways, and
2. demonstrating strong industry stewardship towards Reef water quality.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Improving the quality of water flowing to coastal wetlands, estuarine, and ecosystems of the GBR is critical to enhancing its resilience and capacity to recover from climatic events such as cyclones, flooding, and coral bleaching. End of catchment targets have been set for all waterways in the GBR catchment under the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan. Measures to reduce losses of pesticide, sediment, and nutrients include:

- maintaining good inter-row ground cover and treelines to slow run-off and increase infiltration
- adopting precision technology for irrigation, fertiliser and pesticide application, including soil/leaf and sap analysis for nutrient budgeting
- frequent calibration and maintenance of monitoring and application equipment
- proactive and frequent monitoring/scouting for weeds, pests, virus and disease
- using on-farm weather stations to ensure practices are undertaken in suitable weather conditions, and
- strategies to provide habitat for beneficial insects which prey on pest species and assist pollination; strategies such as mowing only every second row, leaving 'mohawks' in each row, and maintaining native vegetation on verges, gullies, and headlands.

THE MACADAMIA INDUSTRY

A diverse range of horticulture crops are represented in Hort360 and Reef Certification participation, including vegetables, avocados, blueberries, mangoes, citrus, lychees, and pineapples.



“We strive to make a positive difference to the environment through best practices in our orchard. Reef Certification helps us maintain focus.”

- Farm Manager of Alloway Macadamias, Johan Oosthuizen

The chart overleaf shows the percentage of hectares per commodity that are Reef Certified as at December 2022.

The macadamia industry's participation represents an exceptional 5,950 hectares of Reef Certified macadamia production. This is approximately a quarter of the total area of Reef Certified horticulture production. Geographically, 94 percent of Reef Certified macadamia orchards are in the Burnett-Mary region. Macadamia growers' interest and support is true testament to the industry's commitment to BMP, and is a significant achievement.



WHAT NEXT?

The macadamia industry is encouraged to maintain this fantastic demonstration of industry leadership through continued involvement in the program. Growers who are not yet involved are invited to contact their closest Hort360 Facilitator to organise an on-farm meeting and benchmark practices.

Growers that proceed to become Reef Certified receive a fully trademarked marketing kit, certificate, and farm gate sign. Benefits to macadamia growers involved in the program include:

- evaluation of practices and identification of areas for improvement
- recognised demonstration of commitment to environmental stewardship
- the potential to leverage a higher price for produce, and
- an opportunity to educate consumers, government, and community on industry-wide values regarding the environment.

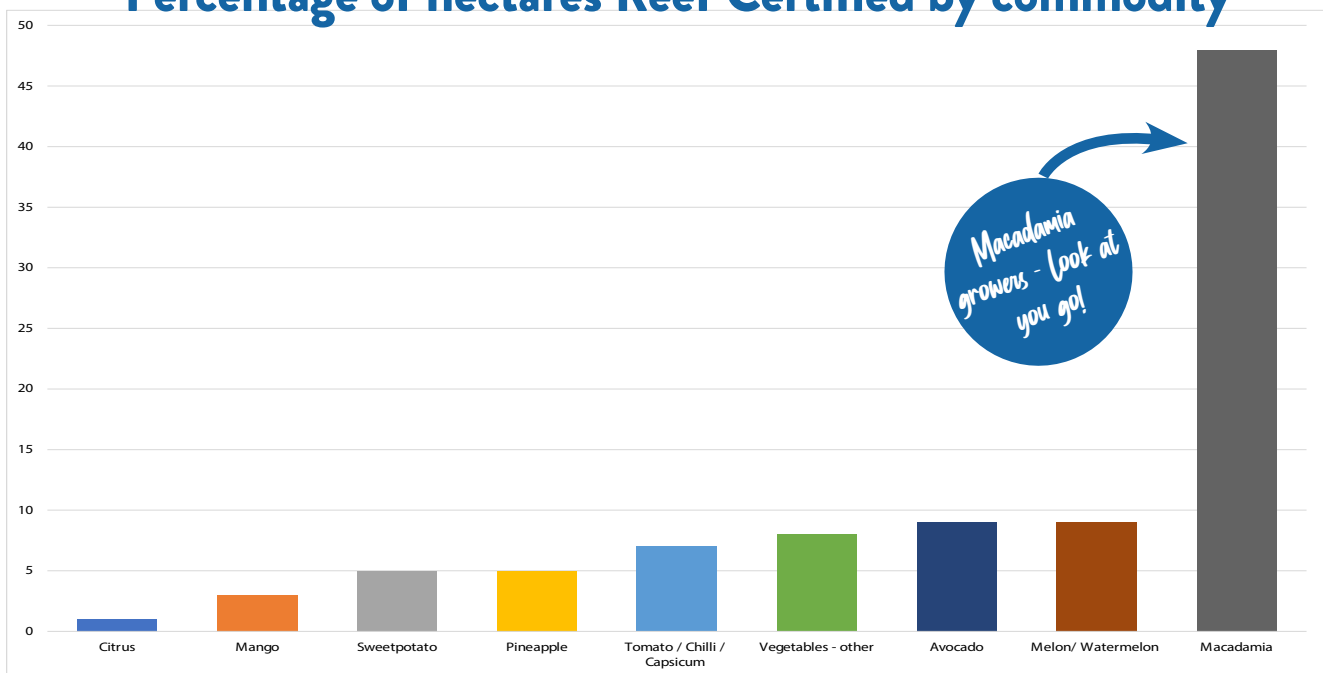
WHAT IS HORT360?

Hort360 is the best management practice (BMP) program developed specifically for commercial horticulture growers to assess land management practices and identify actions to make improvements.

The program involves ‘benchmarking’, which is a useful tool in identifying changes that can prevent losses of fertiliser, pesticide, run-off, and top soil. Such incremental on-farm changes can contribute to improving Reef water quality, and demonstrate individual grower stewardship to the GBR.

Participation in Hort360 benchmarking and Reef Certification is 100% free and voluntary. Growers who undergo Hort360 benchmarking are not obliged to become Reef Certified.

Percentage of hectares Reef Certified by commodity



GETTING INVOLVED

In addition to benchmarking and Reef Certification using Hort360, Growcom coordinates activities for growers to support industry in making practice improvements. Activities like field days, workshops, bus trips, and paddock walks are important ways that growers can remain engaged in the project and receive information on practices that contribute to reef water quality improvements.

Hort360 GBR is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.

Growcom is the dedicated project delivery arm of the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG).



QUEENSLAND FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS

