



# QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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## Submission

29 September 2020

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Online via: [haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/reef-2050-plan](https://haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/reef-2050-plan)

To Whom It May Concern

### Re: The Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Review (September 2020)

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of intensive and irrigated agriculture in Queensland. It is a federation that represents the interests of 21 peak state and national agriculture industry organisations which, in turn, collectively represents more than 14,000 farmers across the state. QFF engages in a broad range of economic, social, environmental and regional issues of strategic importance to the productivity, sustainability and growth of the agricultural sector. QFF's mission is to secure a strong and sustainable future for Queensland farmers by representing the common interests of our member organisations:

- CANEGROWERS
- Cotton Australia
- Growcom
- Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland (NGIQ)
- Queensland Chicken Growers Association (QCGA)
- Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO)
- Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA)
- Queensland United Egg Producers (QUEP)
- Turf Queensland
- Queensland Chicken Meat Council (QCMC)
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group (BRIG)
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area Irrigators Ltd (BRIA)
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd (CDIL)
- Fairbairn Irrigation Network Ltd
- Mallowa Irrigation Ltd
- Pioneer Valley Water Cooperative Ltd (PV Water)
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd
- Eton Irrigation Scheme Ltd
- Pork Queensland Inc
- Tropical Carbon Farming Innovation Hub
- Lockyer Water Users Forum.

*The united voice of intensive and irrigated agriculture*



QFF welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian and Queensland Governments on the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan (LTSP) review. The LTSP must present to Australia and the international community, a comprehensive overarching strategy which recognises the Reef's value as an environmental and economic asset that supports communities and generates wealth.

A considerable proportion of QFF members are in close proximity to coastal Queensland, with primary industries forming the predominant land use in the coastal zone.

Agricultural industries and farmers are continuing to significantly improve land management practices and maintain water quality improvements, reversing the long-term increases in sediment, nutrients and pesticides entering the Reef. Whilst science indicates that there is further work to be done, the agricultural industries have been proactive in their approach. The agriculture sector is still unsure what impact the COVID-19 pandemic will ultimately have on the sector and regional communities but remains passionate about maintaining momentum in practice change and adoption of best practice.

The QFF is a member of the Reef Advisory Committee (RAC) and has previously provided advice to assist in the review of the Plan, so this submission will be brief.

### **Vision and Outcomes**

QFF supports the new vision and outcomes framework for the Reef outlined in the Plan.

QFF has raised at previous RAC meetings, the need for the document to be repositioned into a more strategic document which focusses effort to achieve the vision. The revised Plan has done this by prioritising five work areas and four cross-cutting enablers that will be essential to the delivery of the Plan. It is not clear whether the current level of funding will be maintained and will be able to meet the vision and desired outcomes of the plan.

### **Outcomes Framework**

QFF welcomes the inclusion of a clear outcomes framework which is logical and represents the desired aspects for a functioning Reef between 2020 and 2050. The objectives and management goals have been designed to be measurable, interpretable, and sensitive to scale, which will be a substantial improvement on the previous Plan.

### **Priority work area 2: Reduce impacts from land-based activities**

QFF notes a priority work area of the Plan is to reduce impacts from land-based activities. QFF supports the acknowledgement of other industries operating on the land close the Reef and actions to address pollution. The Plan improves coordination and delivery of water quality outcomes by prioritising pollution reduction efforts at the local level through regional water quality plans.

Agriculture is the major land use and receives a significant focus for action and funding under the Plan. QFF is concerned with the ongoing constraints in progress in relation to water quality, including:

1. The lack of realistic, industry-specific targets for water quality improvement that have an agreed roadmap for achievement;
2. Lack of industry confidence in the reliability and relevance of the Paddock to Reef program and the associated Water Quality Report Card process; and
3. The current level of government investment is insufficient to meet the ambitious water quality targets.

QFF continues to assert that the adoption of a long-term, strategic funding model commensurate with water quality targets or bring targets into line with current funding levels to help manage community expectation needs to occur. QFF is not convinced the recent investment by the GBRF will provide the

long-term outcomes required. With the onset of the significant impact of COVID-19 the ability for philanthropic investment in the Reef may be well under previous expectations that the GBRF and the Australian Government have set.

QFF is pleased to see that the Plan commits to addressing all impacts on the Reef (i.e. climate, all land management activities) to help reduce the inequity felt by farmers who are often the only group targeted to 'fix' the Reef.

A long-term perspective is necessary to meet the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan goals for reducing agriculture's impact on the Reef, and a high level of social capital and capacity needs to be developed and maintained in the reef regions to achieve the required changes. QFF believes that the Reef Alliance is a vital network to advise on key issues impacting the Great Barrier Reef. Further investment needs to be made as partners are currently considering both the scope and expansion of the membership, which will ultimately add value to the water quality investments and continue to provide a forum for lessons learned.

### **Reporting**

QFF supports the need for reporting on achievements of the Plan. The need for a reporting framework that outlines progress in each priority work area annually is essential as well as a more detailed report every five years with information on progress towards the objectives and management goals is critical. However, there must be consistency to the reporting framework.

Queensland's agricultural sector requires a long-term approach to address the issues of water quality and climate change for the Great Barrier Reef. Agriculture has a committed seat at the table to strengthen existing initiatives and implement long term strategic plans as well to protect the Reef. Farmers across the State have already stood up to be counted on this issue. The QFF acknowledges agriculture's commitment to the healthy future of the Reef and the considerable amount of work already undertaken, but for the overall health of the Reef, we need all stakeholders to continue this important work.

The QFF appreciates the opportunity to comment on the LTSP. The QFF is committed to working with the Queensland and Australian Governments in continuing to implement the LTSP and subsequent initiatives which improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef.

If you have any queries about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Adam Knapp at [adam@qff.org.au](mailto:adam@qff.org.au).

Yours sincerely

Dr Georgina Davis  
Chief Executive Officer