



Runoff minimised by good land managers

Strong land management by the agricultural sector will help minimise sediment and chemical runoff into the Great Barrier Reef in the wake of devastating floods across Queensland, says state peak farm group AgForce.

AgForce reef spokesman and Kilcummin beef producer Peter Anderson said reports of contaminated runoff entering river systems fail to take into account the good seasonal conditions and the land management skills of producers.

“Agriculture plays just one part in our vast landscape. Towns, roads, national parks and other key infrastructure all contribute to the runoff caused by flood,” Mr Anderson said.

“Floods of this magnitude will always result in soil loss despite the best efforts of producers, but graziers have the best grass coverage they have seen for a long time, securing the soil and slowing water as it heads towards major rivers, creeks and gullies.

“In some ways it has been fortunate that the Burdekin and Fitzroy catchments are having one of the best seasons in about 20 years, because it means land condition is at its best and top-soil and sediment runoff has been minimised.”

Mr Anderson said the time of year has also minimised the amount of chemicals possibly present in the top soil of farming land.

“Most of the floodwater has inundated well-established crops, which is devastating for growers, but it does mean that most fertiliser and chemicals have been absorbed by the crops and are not sitting in the top layers of soil.

“The bottom line is producers have gone to massive efforts to protect their land and the surrounding riverine environments and have minimised the impact of these record floods.”

Mr Anderson said AgForce is also concerned with mine spill runoff and the impact this contaminated water will have on agricultural land and the greater riverine environments.

“With almost unprecedented mine water pumping under authorised permits, as well as uncontrolled water runoff from both storage dams and mine pits, AgForce is working with the Queensland government to ensure that minimal impact occurs through this possible contamination source.

“It is naive to suggest that this water - that contains chemicals with unknown impacts - will have no effect and the volume of water that these sources are flowing into will dilute any possible contamination.

“AgForce has called on the Government to regulate these sources to the fullest extent of the legislation to ensure that agricultural land, waterways and the reef are not put at risk from contamination.”

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