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Taking some of the legwork and guesswork out of choosing the right fertiliser

Sugar Research Australia (SRA) has developed a new tool for sugarcane growers to help select the right fertiliser blend that matches the nutritional requirements of their paddocks.

The tool is called FertFinder and is available via the SRA website, www.sugarresearch.com.au. It is aimed at assisting sugarcane growers and advisors to filter through the hundreds of fertiliser products available on the market.

The tool was developed by SRA Adoption Officer Mr Gavin Rodman, who said FertFinder had been tailored for use in all regions of the Australian sugarcane industry.

“The current practice used to find a fertiliser that will meet your crop’s nutrient requirements relies on experience, multiple calculations, plenty of time and sometimes a little bit of luck. Trawling through fertiliser product cards from your local suppliers can take time, particularly if your crop requires multiple nutrients,” Mr Rodman said.

“Finding a fertiliser blend that has each of these nutrients in the right proportion can also be frustrating, as you may find something that meets your crop’s nitrogen and potassium requirements, but not the phosphorus, for example.

“The development of this tool will make this task simpler by highlighting fertiliser blends that are available in your region and that meet the nutritional requirements of your crop.”

Soil testing and choosing the right fertiliser are crucial aspects of the SIX EASY STEPS approach to nutrient management, which continues to be validated by SRA across a range of soil types, farming systems, and climatic conditions.

SIX EASY STEPS is a science-based nutrient management tool that enables the adoption of best practice nutrient management on-farm.

It is acknowledged as industry best-practice for nutrient management to optimise productivity and profitability without adversely influencing soil fertility or causing off-farm effects.

Mulgrave district grower, Mr Jeff Day, said that he farmed on a diverse range of soils including red volcanic, heavy clay, and sandy clays, which also meant that he required a range of fertiliser rates based on soil tests and use of the SIX EASY STEPS.

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“Based on the soil tests, I then follow the recommendations for the required nutrients. Quite often I require a custom blend, so that does cause me to wonder if that impacts the price of my fertiliser,” Mr Day said. “A tool like this would really help with decision making in terms of choosing the right blend, and shop around for the best price.”

CAPTION: SRA Adoption Officer Gavin Rodman shows the FertFinder tool to Gordonvale grower Jeff Day.

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