



QUEENSLAND  
FARMERS'  
FEDERATION

# Central Queensland Water Plan Review, November 2024

## Prepared by:

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The united voice of  
Queensland agriculture

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This submission is provided to:

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## Our members

- Canegrowers
- Cotton Australia
- Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers
- Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland
- eastAUSmilk
- Australian Cane Farmers Association
- Queensland United Egg Producers
- Turf Queensland
- Pork Queensland
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd
- Fairburn Irrigation Network
- Mallowa Irrigation
- Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Ltd
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd
- Eton Irrigation
- Lockyer Valley Water Users

## About the Queensland Farmers' Federation

**The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of agriculture in Queensland.**

Our members are agricultural peak bodies who collectively represent more than 13,000 farmers who produce food, fibre and foliage across the state.

QFF's peak body members come together to develop policy and lead projects on the key issues that are important to their farmer members and the Queensland agriculture sector.

Together, we form a strong, unified voice leveraging our effectiveness by working together to drive policy and initiatives that support a strong future for Queensland agriculture.

## Submission

The Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water's, Central Queensland Water Plan Review, November 2024.

We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

### Overview

The Central Queensland Water Plan will combine and review the existing Fitzroy Basin, Boyne River Basin and Calliope River Basin water plan areas. This area will cover 155,795 km<sup>2</sup> in Central Queensland.

This region is experiencing significant industrial growth with new and emerging industries and appetite for investment. There are significant implications for water needs and use across the combined plan area and multiple new water infrastructure projects are being considered. The new plan area aims to support economic growth while supporting environmental objectives for the region.

The QFF has played an active role in the consultative process for the amalgamation of the three water plans. QFF welcomes this initiative, provided that the proposed Central Queensland Water Plan serves as an administrative plan that incorporates a strong emphasis on protecting existing water allocations, and enhances investment in established and emerging agricultural operations.

QFF's support is heavily contingent on each of the three catchments maintaining their own hydrological independence for all water management activities involved in the planning, water resource allocations, licencing and other activities of the Queensland Water Act 2000 planning framework.

The QFF highlights that there is a pressing and increasing demand for affordable, secure, and accessible water to support the viability and continued prosperity of agriculture in these regions. The proposed footprint for the new Central Queensland Water Plan encompasses several key growth regions for cotton and perennial horticulture (macadamias, mangoes and lychees), with the western region of the water plan area experiencing investment in citrus and table grapes.

In addition to agricultural viability and prosperity in the proposed region, the QFF recognises that there are increasing pressures on urban water supply and security, which risks the social and

economic wellbeing of communities in the region who are currently exposed to a material continuity of supply risk.

## Infrastructure and non-infrastructure initiatives

The security and reliability of water in the Central Queensland Water Plan area underpin the success and prosperity of agricultural production and economic outputs for the Central Queensland region.

It is estimated that the Central Queensland region contributes \$1.52 billion in agricultural production annually<sup>1</sup>. Ongoing and consistent access to reliable and affordable water sustains this economic activity in the region, enabling producers to continue to grow world class food, fibre and foliage products.

Communities and producers within the Central Queensland Water Plan area continue to experience prolonged periods of drought, increasing instance of extreme weather events and inconsistent seasonal rainfall. The rainfall and climate projections presented by the Queensland Government to date demonstrate why investment in water infrastructure in this region is fundamental to providing water surety to the region and confidence triggering investment in agricultural expansion.

QFF and its members welcome ongoing consultation to support the investment of water infrastructure initiatives by the Queensland Government. The QFF supports investigation, and cost-benefit outcomes, of potential investment in irrigation infrastructure, dams, and weirs. QFF's support is contingent on the basis that any investment must not create adverse impacts for primary producers that may limit or reduce the supply of existing water entitlements or access to new water.

QFF is supportive of additional opportunities where the department examines non-infrastructure initiatives and advocates for a modern and progressive water trading system for the Queensland agriculture sector. QFF is supportive of examination of options for water trading in a new Central Queensland Water Plan, that if enshrined will serve as a critical mechanism to provide flexibility to primary producers.

## On-farm water use efficiency opportunities

QFF welcomes initiatives to examine on-farm water efficiency options, recommending a coordinated and consultative approach with the broader agricultural sector. Our producers are highly motivated to incorporate existing and new initiatives and opportunities that increase on farm efficiencies and productivity that results in increased financial returns to the farm gate.

Advancement in irrigation equipment, soil monitoring technology and crop selection for ongoing agricultural viability and climate resilience are just some examples of how primary producers are increasing water use efficiency, cutting input costs and increasing crop yields, in turn boosting agricultural production and economic contributions in the regions.

As the Central Queensland region has been identified as a key growth area for cotton production, the QFF highlights the forward-thinking approach from growers adapting their operations to incorporate more data driven decision making on farm.

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<sup>1</sup> Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries *Datafarm* 2023/24 available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/news-media/campaigns/data-farm>

The cotton industry has continued to lead the way in demonstrating farm irrigation efficiency, with improved water-use productivity of 52% by growers since 1997. This is a showcase of the effectiveness of collaboration between government, science and industry. The cotton industry continues to experience increasing yields while using less water, through the selection of crop varieties that are proven to be more suitable to the Central Queensland region, utilising modern soil monitoring technology, and innovations irrigation equipment that ensures water is being used effectively and efficiently.

## Summary

Queensland's agricultural sector is a major contributor to sustainable water resource management. The consideration of the amalgamation of the Fitzroy Basin, Boyne River Basin and the Calliope River Basin requires a long-term holistic, innovative and proactive approach to address the challenges of water availability, water security, affordability and climate change. A new amalgamated water plan must not create adverse impacts for primary producers that may limit or reduce the supply of existing water entitlements or access to new water.

The QFF looks forward to further consultation through the relevant Central Queensland Regional Water Area working groups and stakeholder advisory group and our opportunity to consider the Central Queensland Water Plan once it is released for comment.

Yours sincerely

Jo Sheppard  
Chief Executive Officer



**This submission is provided by the Queensland Farmers' Federation**

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