



Years of soil improvement boosts Calavos capsicums

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QUEENSLAND capsicum grower Lou Curino has spent a lot of time improving soils on the family's Calavos properties near Bundaberg and so he is not about to put anything into them that may be of inferior quality.

Lou said the former tobacco farms largely comprised sand, but today the soil structure reflects the benefits of a capsicum and cane rotation, together with millet grown between the capsicum rows for extensive mulching. They also use the millet with sorghum for fallow crops and are now looking to incorporate brassica species.

Lou and his wife, Kerry, grow capsicums over 60 hectares and cane over 80ha on a rotation of three years of cane followed by three years of capsicums.

"The rotation with cane has been good," Lou said.

"We have built up our soils over time and we now use 10-20 per cent less fertiliser."

Soil testing is performed on land where cane has been grown for six years and Lou uses the highest quality fertilisers to ensure optimum capsicum production and quality.

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Lou Curino, Calavos



Queensland capsicum grower Lou Curino, Calavos, and Haifa Australia Sales Agronomist Peter Anderson inspect the quality of one of the Curino's capsicum crops.



Millet is grown between the capsicum rows for extensive mulching.

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Pioneering the Future



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The Haifa products are highly efficient early growth fertilisers.

The Curinos target up to 1.8 kilograms of capsicums per plant, equating to 2000 8kg boxes of “number one fruit” per acre.

Production can fluctuate according to different varieties, with Tycoon and Warlock now the dominant lines grown.

Capsicums are planted on January 15 for picking from April 10-15 and again on July 17 for harvest from November 17.

The high quality bore water is fed to crops three times each day during the night and early morning.

“We water during the calm periods, not in high winds, and before the heat of the day,” Lou said.

A new pump safely housed in a shed also is allowing Lou to “dial the horsepower” of the system.

“Instead of using 150psi pressures, we are down to 15-40 pound. This has cut our electricity bill in half.”

Recycling is another big focus for the Curinos. Trickle tape that is used under plastic for the capsicums is later pulled out and used for the cane production.

“We now water 30 acres of cane in 12 hours. Previously, this used to take 60hrs with a travelling irrigator,” Lou said.

The Curinos also fertigate their cane through the trickle system.



Pictured with some of the Haifa fertilisers used in the capsicum nutrition program, Lou says the solubility of the Haifa products is very good.



Lou discusses the secrets of his capsicum success with Peter.



Peter and Lou with the Curino’s new pump system that has allowed them to dramatically lower pressures and cut their electricity bill in half.