



## Soil health a top priority for Lockyer Valley farm

**For over 60 years the Sutton family has been proudly producing vegetables in Queensland's Lockyer Valley.**

Third generation farmer, Brock Sutton said one of the challenges of growing in the Lockyer Valley is keeping soil health available to the plants.

"Soil health and plant nutrition are number one in our game because if you don't have a healthy soil or a healthy plant, you don't get the yield and you don't get the quality of the product that you want to grow," Brock said.

Amongst the best practices utilised by Sutton Farms is a program to look after soil health by minimising soil compaction on their Lockyer Valley properties.

"Soil compaction is a big problem with small crops. The development of GPS has helped minimise this problem," Brock said.

"We've also taken an approach of extending our implements out to six metres, which means that we cover three times as much ground with every pass.

"The biggest identifier of that is yield and plant health. With going over the ground less often and having less of the compaction there, the plant is healthier and you get better yields."

Brock also explains that the business has a big focus on water management. If done well, this improves efficiencies while also being good for plant growth.

"Efficient water use is critical to soil health and plant health - if you're overwatering or under watering it's going to affect both the soil and the plant," Brock said.

"Overwatering can create an anaerobic environment in the soil, which is detrimental to both the soil and the plant. To combat that we're using water logging diaries and looking into new technologies that will affect the water usage."

When considering all techniques put in place by Sutton Farms to improve soil and water health, including soil testing, green manuring, rotations and minimising soil compaction, Brock believes they are making a difference on the property.

"I think there are drastic improvements that have been made in soil health, not only by us but industry-wide," Brock said.

"Best practices are always evolving and the new technologies that are available to us have helped the whole industry improve on our soil and plant health.

"There's too much to know for any one farmer to know it all, so I use peak industry bodies like Growcom and the Hort360 program."

Growcom's Hort360 program, the best management practice program for horticulture, is designed to give growers a 360 degree view of their farm business operations, identifying potential risks, capitalising on business opportunities and highlighting unnecessary farm expenses.

The soil management and water quality modules are currently being delivered in south east Queensland and all horticultural growers in the Lockyer, Bremer, mid-Brisbane or Pumicestone sub-catchments are invited to take part in identifying areas of high risk in soil and water quality management. As part of this process a free property map will be provided.

*Watch the video online now!*

<http://bit.ly/2cOHuVZ>



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR TO BOOK A PROPERTY VISIT, PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Rowena Beveridge**

Hort360 facilitator

0417 783 313

[rbeveridge@growcom.com.au](mailto:rbeveridge@growcom.com.au)

**Anna Geddes**

Hort360 facilitator

0413 902 218

[ageddes@growcom.com.au](mailto:ageddes@growcom.com.au)

The sediment and nutrient management program is conducted in collaboration with the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

