



Ecological sustainability

Why should I care about future generations, what have they ever done for me? - Groucho Marx

The essence of ecological sustainability is that resources are utilised at a rate at which they can replace themselves; they are left intact for future generations.

Biodiversity (biological diversity) is a fundamental pillar of ecological sustainability. Ecological sustainability has two components - maintenance and restoration. The development of ecologically sustainable systems will therefore require the development of agricultural systems that both maintain biophysical and ecological systems and restore the ecological landscape.

Biodiversity conservation is essential to achieving sustainable clean and green production. There is a significant and growing market demand for greener production, with global markets increasingly seeking proof that products are sourced in a sustainable manner. Many agribusinesses are currently preparing Environmental Management Systems (EMS) that provide clearly defined standards and measures of how well they are managing sustainable production.

Businesses that are able to demonstrate ecological sustainable production, including native biodiversity conservation, will be well placed to maintain market access when others may be excluded. Many are now examining the role of native biodiversity management as a key component of an Environmental Management System.

Success goes to those who get to the future first.¹ - Peter Ellyard, Futurist

The main pressures on Queensland's biodiversity are the clearing of remnant vegetation, changed fire regimes and the impacts of invasive species. There has also been a significant increase in the number of rare and threatened plants.

- The most heavily cleared areas from 1999 to 2001 were the Brigalow Belt, Mulga Lands, Desert Uplands and Mitchell Grass Downs.
- In 2002 an additional 8 plant species were listed as presumed extinct, 68 as endangered, 34 as vulnerable, and 6 as rare.
- At least 1298 plants, 19 mammals, 13 birds, 15 fishes, 3 reptiles and 1 amphibian have become naturalised.
- Queensland has 15 of the 20 species listed as weeds of national significance and many more species are serious environmental weeds.

Clearly these figures do not demonstrate positive outcomes for our landscape. However some gains have been achieved to help move the environment towards ecological sustainability.

- The clearing of remnant vegetation in 2001 across Queensland dropped by 51% from that of 1999.
- In June 2002, 4.1% of Queensland was in protected areas, up from 3.89% in 1999.
- The proportion of regional ecosystems represented in reserves rose from 69% in 1999 to 74% in 2002
- Recovery plans have been prepared for 14% of the 588 threatened plants and animals listed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*



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