



# Smartcane BMP Newsletter

December 2014, Issue 7

Welcome to the seventh edition of the CANEGROWERS Smartcane BMP newsletter. This quarterly newsletter is your guide to the latest news and information on the CANEGROWERS Smartcane best management practice (BMP) program across Queensland. The aim of the newsletter is to provide growers with regular updates on the progress of the Smartcane BMP program, case studies, useful web-links and a calendar of events.



Malcolm Petrie  
BMP Project Director,  
CANEGROWERS



## Smartcane Program Update

On 3 December 2014, the Smartcane BMP program celebrated 12 months of operation. Over that time the program has registered 687 growers covering 82,208 hectares under cane and a total farm area of 101,231 hectares.

CANEGROWERS is currently finalising a new agreement with the Queensland Government to continue the delivery the Smartcane BMP program for a further three years. The new agreement will support a broader range of service providers in the delivery program including CANEGROWERS, productivity services companies and Farmacist.

To further enhance the program's success into the future, CANEGROWERS is establishing a high level steering committee inviting CEOs and chairs from the following organisations; CANEGROWERS, the Australian Cane Farmers Association, Sugar Research Australia and Australian Sugar Milling Council. The aim of the steering committee is to foster the industry-wide approach which will be required to support greater grower involvement and ultimately remove the reef regulations.

Early in the new year CANEGROWERS will also be convening a Smartcane BMP technical working group made up predominantly of productivity services staff to discuss and develop district specific case studies. These will focus on growers registered in the Smartcane program who have achieved improved productivity, profitability and stewardship outcomes by implementing better industry practices.

Another important development is that end users of sugar, including manufacturers such as Coca-Cola, Nestle, Unilever, are increasingly focusing on having a verifiable sustainability standard for the growing, processing and refining of sugar products by 2020. As a risk management approach, CANEGROWERS has evaluated the only current global sustainability standard for sugar, Bonsucro, to determine whether its standards could be incorporated into the Smartcane program. As part of

the process Matt Kealley (Senior Manager Environment and Natural Resources) and I attended a Bonsucro Conference in the Philippines 10-14 November where I presented a number of key requirements to effect and refine program alignment. These requirements included:

1. redefine standards that acknowledge developed country requirements e.g. Australian cane industry,
2. support Smartcane becoming a gateway for Queensland cane growers accessing Bonsucro production standards if and when required,
3. support non-members (grower) access to the Bonsucro calculator, and
4. evaluate and explore alignment audit and certification processes.

Following the presentation the Bonsucro board provided in principle support to piloting an evaluation of alignment between the two programs. It is important to note that if CANEGROWERS proceeds with adding additional standards to the Smartcane program it will be accessed under a separate section of the program and it will be up to the grower to decide whether or not to seek Bonsucro accreditation.

Finally, the Smartcane facilitators remain focused and available to assist growers to undertake a self-assessment or seek accreditation in the three key Smartcane modules. With growers support, industry will go a long way to meeting the government target of 1,520 growers self-assessed, inclusive of 380 ERMP growers accredited, and facilitate the removal of the industry regulations.

For more information simply visit [www.smartcane.com.au](http://www.smartcane.com.au) and follow the prompts. By participating in the Smartcane BMP program, you are supporting your industry in taking control of how we farm.

Wishing you all a safe and happy Christmas and New Year!

## Smartcane survey

By Matt Kealley, CANEGROWERS Senior Manager-Environment

There is a lot of 'noise' within the sugarcane industry about the Smartcane BMP program but it has not been clear how the majority of growers have been perceiving it. CANEGROWERS believes its very important to understand the views of sugarcane growers, as insights into their current perceptions and barriers to participation will be able to guide the ongoing delivery of the program.

CANEGROWERS has contracted Sefton & Associates to undertake a survey of grower perceptions and attitudes to Smartcane BMP. The survey is being conducted by Instinct and Reason, a market research company.

Some growers in your districts may have already received calls to undertake the survey. It is a phone questionnaire, aimed at growers across the cane industry and CANEGROWERS is after a total of 100 participants.

Sefton & Associates will be providing the outcomes of the survey to CANEGROWERS in late December. The intent is to better understand what growers are thinking to guide future communication, marketing and the ongoing delivery of the program.

## Smartcane BMP Farms & Areas

684	Farms in the system
39294	Area Under Dryland (ha)
42959	Area Under Irrigated Cane (ha)
101231	Farm Area Total (ha)



Malcolm Petrie explaining the industry-wide partnerships that form a strong basis for Australia's Smartcane BMP program, to a Bonsucro meeting in the Philippines



## Diploma and BMP: celebrating farming achievements

18 Queensland sugarcane growers have achieved a Diploma in Agriculture this year through a process which recognised their years of experience and the skills they've acquired on the job.

The growers are also now well on the way to having their farming practices acknowledged through the Smartcane BMP program.

Smartcane BMP facilitator Deb Telford provided assistance as the growers worked hard through the busy planting and harvesting season to achieve the qualification.

"This process gives something back – it's a nationally and internationally recognised reward for all their years of hard work," Deb says. "The pressure was on but they were committed."

Deb explains that the group has followed a process called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which gives candidates credit for the skills, knowledge and experience they've gained through working or doing other training programs, formal or informal.

"These growers participated in a one day Occupational Health and Safety training workshop to develop their Managing Farm Safety Folder.

"They also worked many evenings collecting evidence and had a half day farm visit to verify their practices," Deb explains.

"As a part of their RPL evidence, they were all self-assessed for at least the three core modules of BMP and now their RPL evidence will be used to gain accreditation in those modules."

Alan Aquilina who farms at Mourilyan is one the growers who was recently presented with his Diploma.

"This is a formal recognition of what we've been doing and have learned," Alan said.

"From an industry and from a farming perspective, the more people who have this qualification, the better for our standing with government and policy makers – it improves the image of farmers and they have to take us seriously."

CANEGROWERS and the Australian Cane Farmers Association have congratulated the farmers on their achievement.

NQ Powertrain was the registered training organisation (RTO) through which the project was delivered and director, Kasey Rudd, says the organisation was proud to have been involved in such an innovative and rewarding project.

"I am also personally overwhelmed by the amount of industry leaders that have participated in the Strategic Fund Investment – RPL Diploma project and look forward to the possibility of further projects of this kind in the near future," she said.

Innisfail brothers Paul and David Cecchi completed the Diploma of Agriculture and believe it, along with Smartcane BMP, make good business sense.

"This is not just a piece of paper, this is formal recognition of my knowledge and my skills as a farmer and responsible custodian of the land," Paul said. "I was surprised myself to realise how many different skills are required every single day during the normal course of farming."

"If I could say anything to help convince other growers about the benefits of Smartcane BMP it would be this: Smartcane is a much better tool and much less demanding than the government program and there are so many people willing to help you along each step of the way that once started, it really is not that hard," he said.

"I would also say that once you are on your way no-one, no government body and no individual can ever doubt your commitment to sustainable farming. Quite simply you will have the evidence – the records and the data, to show them otherwise."

"The more people that take up Smartcane BMP, the better for industry and the better for all of agriculture."

*Dip Ag graduates at the presentation ceremony*  
L-R David Cecchi, Frank Hughes (hiding a bit), Alf Strano, Alan Aquilina, Robert Brooks, Paul Cecchi, Jake McLagan, Ray Zamora, Alan Cross, John Guglielmi, Dan Marano, Stephen Cole, Adrian Azzopardi, Joe Marano, Debra Telford

*"It is great to have our skills learnt through work and life experience recognised by a formal qualification. Adrian's Diploma of Agriculture has validated and enhanced his existing skills and the qualification will open doors for him if he pursues an off-farm job in the future. My Diploma of Management has assisted advance my career and I'm now studying an Advanced Diploma of Management with a view to completing a Management Degree. Thank You Deb Telford, CANEGROWERS and NQ Powertrain for facilitating this project." Tracy and Adrian Darveniza*

*"It is with great pleasure that CANEGROWERS Innisfail congratulates the 18 growers that have been able to attain their Diploma in Agriculture, through recognition of prior learning whilst also implementing Smartcane BMP. The Smartcane BMP system is industry-based and grower-driven to ensure that growers and industry are recognised for the important contribution they make to environmental sustainability. It is showing that good stewardship of the land that grows sugarcane can be carried out by individual growers and without government intervention.*

*It is also pleasing that other growers are now wanting to be more involved and use their implementation of Smartcane BMP as a springboard to achieving their own Diploma in Agriculture. CANEGROWERS Innisfail looks forward to providing these further opportunities for the growers in our district." Sam Spina, Deputy Chairman, CANEGROWERS Innisfail*

*"The ACFA Northern District wishes to commend the growers who have successfully completed their Diploma in Agriculture though Smartcane BMP. Smartcane BMP is an industry-grown accreditation system to meet the needs of farm environmental and economic sustainability. It records the concern we share for our land.*

*Notable are the efforts of Deb Telford the BMP Facilitator in Innisfail for the direction and support she offers growers to partake in recording and demonstrating our farming practices. I urge all growers to participate in Smartcane BMP for its ability to promote continual improvement on our farms and the broader community." Michael Camilleri, Chairman ACFA Northern District*



## Isis growers advocate involvement in Smartcane BMP Program

Two farming couples in the Isis district, recently registered for Smartcane BMP, have called on other growers to get involved. They believe growers generally follow best practice farm management and have nothing to fear about the accreditation process.

It is about getting organised, answering questions on your farming practices, gathering evidence and submitting a request to be assessed for accreditation.

Chris and Beth Jensen of Wallaville, suppliers to the Isis Central Mill, have been farming for approximately four years. They are part of the brigade of young farmers seeing value in becoming accredited under Smartcane BMP. Chris poses the question, "If you follow best management practices, why wouldn't you seek accreditation?"

Farming on the banks of the Burnett River, Chris and Beth have faced two major floods in their short farming career. They are bouncing back due to support from the industry and flood recovery assistance measures.

"Being an earth moving contractor has also helped us re-establish the farm. We follow industry standard best management practice and we are proud of what we have achieved," Chris says.

According to Chris and Beth, more growers need to become involved in the program.

John and Shaaryn Tanner are second generation cane growers supplying the Isis

Central Mill from their farm in the South Kolan area. John purchased the farm from his father and is actively involved in a harvesting cooperative.

He says his farming practices closely mirror industry standard practices and he and Shaaryn are assisted in the farm office by daughter Carley.

When quizzed by Smartcane BMP facilitator Bruce Quinn about what records he maintained, John needed coaching from Carley to produce his records! Bruce said John's records were substantial but needed to be organised in a way that improved their value to his farming operation.

The Tanner family sees value in the Smartcane BMP program and is keen to work towards accreditation. And of course, the Smartcane BMP program will help with the records in the future.



Above: Cyclone Oswald in January 2013 picked up all the Jensen's T-Tape and deposited it on powerlines.

Below: Bruce Quinn (Isis Productivity Limited) assists Chris and Beth Jensen of Wallaville to enter details of their farming practices into the Smartcane BMP database.





## Measure the cost of change

The Queensland Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry provides a free Farm Economic Analysis Tool (FEAT) that helps growers evaluate cane farming enterprises and measures the economic implications of making changes to current practices.

FEAT can be used to determine gross margins, farm operating returns and return on investment to assist in the decision making process.

By using the FEAT program, specific operation costs can be calculated.

FEAT can be used to calculate the costs of machinery, fertiliser and herbicide management costs and farm labour requirements, thereby providing information for informed decision making.

The computer based program is referenced in the Smartcane BMP Business Management Module and is available for free download from the DAFF website at [www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au)

## Prepare to be part of the future for the expansion of agriculture

Governments' aim is to double the value of agricultural production by 2040 and the Smartcane BMP program provides the opportunity for the sugar industry to get on board and take advantage of this push.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has determined that to cope with the increasing demands of the emerging knowledge society and information economy, a "core skills" level (known as level 3) will be the minimum requirement.

The Smartcane BMP program provides the opportunity to benchmark practices against industry standard. These are the equivalent of core level 3 skills. With the assistance of the Smartcane BMP Facilitator in each district, an individual action plan can be designed to provide an organised and structured strategy for improvement that will not create financial hardship.

State and federal governments have contributed substantial money to assist the sugar industry to implement improved practices to generate not just water quality outcomes, but increased productivity.

Local productivity services and CANEGROWER district offices have training and extension activities available now. So get on board.

### Mossman:

Claire Bailey  
[cbmossag@bigpond.com](mailto:cbmossag@bigpond.com)  
07 4098 2286

### Tableland:

John Barbetti  
[john.barbetti@bigpond.com](mailto:john.barbetti@bigpond.com)  
0400 140 558

### Cairns region (Mulgrave & Babinda):

Sandra Henrich  
[sandra\\_henrich@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:sandra_henrich@canegrowers.com.au)  
0428 969 852

### Innisfail:

Debra Telford  
[debra\\_telford@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:debra_telford@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 4063 2477 | 0428 875 069

### Tully:

Frank Hughes  
[fl.hughes7@bigpond.com](mailto:fl.hughes7@bigpond.com)  
07 4068 4900 | 0419 653 329

### Herbert River:

Maria Battoraro  
[maria\\_battoraro@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:maria_battoraro@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 4776 5350 | 0437 833 584

Richard Hobbs  
[hoga@westnet.com.au](mailto:hoga@westnet.com.au)  
0427 771 780

### Burdekin:

Gary Halliday  
[gary\\_halliday@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:gary_halliday@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 4782 1922 | 0438 747 596

Rob Milla  
[rmilla@bps.net.au](mailto:rmilla@bps.net.au)  
07 4783 1101 | 0490 036 329

### Proserpine:

Christine Peterson  
[christine\\_peterson@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:christine_peterson@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 4945 1844 | 0429 467 615

### Mackay / Plane Creek:

John Agnew  
[jagnew@maps.org.au](mailto:jagnew@maps.org.au)  
07 4963 6833 | 0417 326 393

John Eden (Mackay)  
[john.eden@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:john.eden@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 4944 2600

### Bundaberg:

Veronica Timm  
[veronica\\_timm@bdbcanegrowers.com.au](mailto:veronica_timm@bdbcanegrowers.com.au)  
07 4151 6070

### Isis:

Wayne Stanley  
[wayne\\_stanley@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:wayne_stanley@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 4126 1444 | 0428 734 756

Bruce Quinn  
[bruce\\_quinn@isisproductivity.com.au](mailto:bruce_quinn@isisproductivity.com.au)  
07 4126 1444 | 0429 114 748

### Maryborough:

Barry Callow  
[barrycallow@marysug.com.au](mailto:barrycallow@marysug.com.au)  
07 4121 4441 | 0487 017 811

### Rocky Point:

Matt Kealley  
[matt\\_kealley@canegrowers.com.au](mailto:matt_kealley@canegrowers.com.au)  
07 3864 6473 | 0407 657 779

## Growers registered per district

