



# Smartcane BMP Newsletter

April 2015, Issue 8

Welcome to the eighth edition of the CANEGROWERS Smartcane BMP newsletter. This quarterly newsletter is your guide to the latest news and information on the Queensland Cane Growers Organisation 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

In the 15 months since the Smartcane BMP went live, the program has been building in momentum with an average of 14 growers registering each week. There are 826 registered growers covering 94,966 hectares under cane and a total farm area of 120,050 hectares.

CANEGROWERS continues to work hard to establish broader industry ownership of the program including the formation of a high level steering committee involving CEOs, managers and board members from the following organisations; CANEGROWERS, Australian Cane Farmers Association, Sugar Research Australia, Queensland Sugar Limited and the Australian Sugar Milling Council. The steering committee's charter is one of collaboration towards a common goal of industry ownership and adoption of the Smartcane BMP program both now and beyond government funding in 2017.

Most recently CANEGROWERS signed an agreement with Sugar Research Australia to deliver both train the trainer (e.g. to Cane Productivity

staff (CPS)) and grower training focusing on the three key water quality modules of Soil Health and Nutrient Management; Weed, Pest and Disease Management and Irrigation and Drainage Management across the industry over the next two years. CANEGROWERS is currently seeking feedback from districts and CPS organisations on grower training needs.

Furthermore, CANEGROWERS has finalised partnership agreements that involve up to eight CPS organisations in the delivery of agronomy and facilitation support to growers seeking to register and become accredited in the Smartcane BMP program. We anticipate more CPS organisations to sign up and support the programs' delivery in the near future.

Finally, CANEGROWERS has secured a further three years funding (2015-2017) under a new deed of agreement with the Queensland Government totalling \$5.8M.■

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.

## New Smartcane BMP phone app eases growers record keeping requirements

Since the commencement of the Smartcane BMP program back in December 2013, CANEGROWERS has received a consistent message from growers that record keeping was both onerous and a major barrier to achieving Smartcane BMP accreditation.

So CANEGROWERS decided to explore a number of ways to resolve this challenge, firstly by developing a paper based Smartcane record keeping manual. This is freely available to members and non-members from district offices and is also available online on the Smartcane website

where you can enter records and save them to your computer.

But this was only part of the solution as there needed to be a better way for growers to record what they do when they do it. So over the past 12 months CANEGROWERS looked into making a Smartcane BMP phone app.

The app allows you to collect and upload your records using your phone and is linked directly to your Smartcane BMP account and automatically updates your records as you record them.

The app supports the following recording keeping operations;

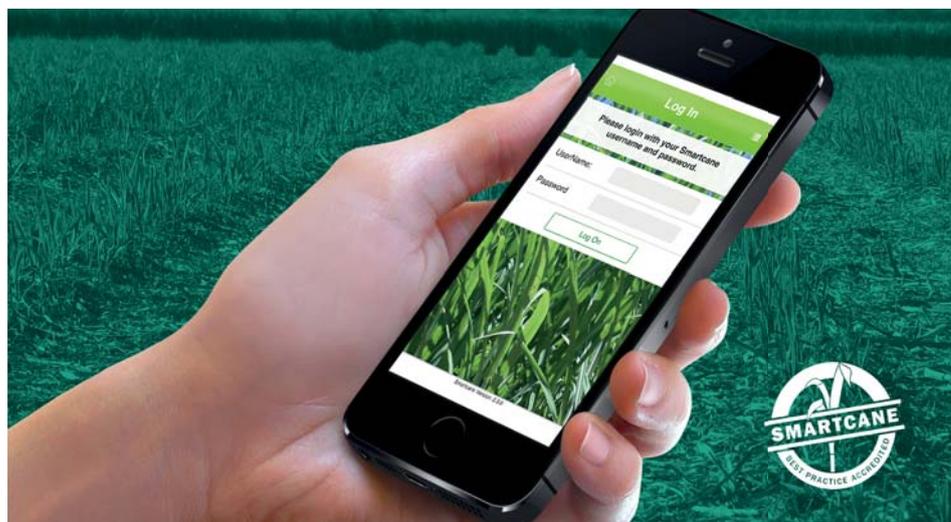
- Ameliorants
- Chemicals
- Cultivation
- Fertiliser
- Herbicides
- Irrigation
- Calibration fertiliser
- Machinery service

Record keeping not only provides important information for you as a grower to better manage your farm, but can also provide important information in supporting you towards accreditation in the Smartcane BMP program.

It is important to note that all records are securely stored and treated confidentially and are not disclosed to any third party, unless requested to do so by the grower.

Best of all you can download it right now from Google Play for Android and the iTunes app store for Apple. Simply get online, type in "smartcane records" and you can get it right now for free.

There is one proviso – you need to be registered for Smartcane BMP. If you're not registered yet, this can quickly be done at [www.smartcane.com.au](http://www.smartcane.com.au) or you can contact your local Smartcane BMP facilitator.■





## New tool for a new generation

The Next Gen Step Up! conference in Far North Queensland was the perfect platform for Smartcane BMP to unveil its new phone app.

Designed to take the record-keeping task to the paddock, it hit a chord with the 160 delegates.

As an event sponsor, Smartcane BMP had a well-visited booth in the trade show and an opportunity to address the conference.

The presentation covered emerging challenges in the industry including water quality targets, the concept of a social licence to operate and the need to improve productivity and profitability along with sustainability.

A live demonstration of the new app on a big screen had the audience delving into pockets for their phones.

Many young growers, working in businesses already registered with Smartcane BMP, downloaded the app on the spot and got a kick out of seeing their farm details load automatically.

Other delegates visited the Smartcane BMP stand for instruction or information to begin the registration process.

As the app is still in pre-release mode, growers who downloaded it undertook to provide feedback and suggestions to fine-tune future versions.

The conference proved to be a valuable opportunity to engage with the younger farmers keen to take an active role in the future of their family farming businesses.



*Matt Kealley helps Innisfail grower Sam Spina download the app onto his phone. Sam said it seemed very easy to use. "I could record my chemical usage on a block as I was filling the tank for the next run. Because the phone is always in my pocket, I can just record things on the go, rather than go back at night and fill in paperwork."*



*Malcolm Petrie answers question about Smartcane and the app from Steve Muscat.*



*Everyone loves their phone! L-R Aaron Linton, Brad Cordon, Jarrod Rossato, Matt Kealley, Luke Horniblow and Mitch Zunker talking about the Smartcane app..*

## Cairns Region Directors dig into BMP drainage module

Eleven CANEGROWERS Cairns Region Board Members are eyeing accreditation in the Smartcane BMP Drainage and Irrigation module.

The Directors all farm in the Wet Tropics which receives some of the highest annual rainfall total in the country. It's no surprise then, that cane farmers in this area see an effective drainage system as an absolute necessity for their farm productivity and profitability.

Earlier this month, the Cairns Region eleven-strong board met to undertake the Smartcane BMP Drainage and Irrigation module with assistance from the region's Smartcane BMP facilitator Sandra Henrich. On the whole, the group was surprised to find that not only were they farming at industry standard but that the evidence required for this module was readily available.

Well on their way to accreditation, it is expected that the Directors from both the Mulgrave and Babinda zones will work with Sandra to put the finishing touches on this module and put it forward for accreditation in the coming weeks.

Chairman of CANEGROWERS Cairns Region, Charlie Zappala views the BMP program as valuable and the Drainage and Irrigation module in particular, very achievable for growers in his area.



"In Babinda, we typically receive over 4,000 millilitres of rain annually," he said.

"Our properties wouldn't be worth farming if this water couldn't get away and our infrastructure would be severely damaged if we didn't take steps to minimise erosion."

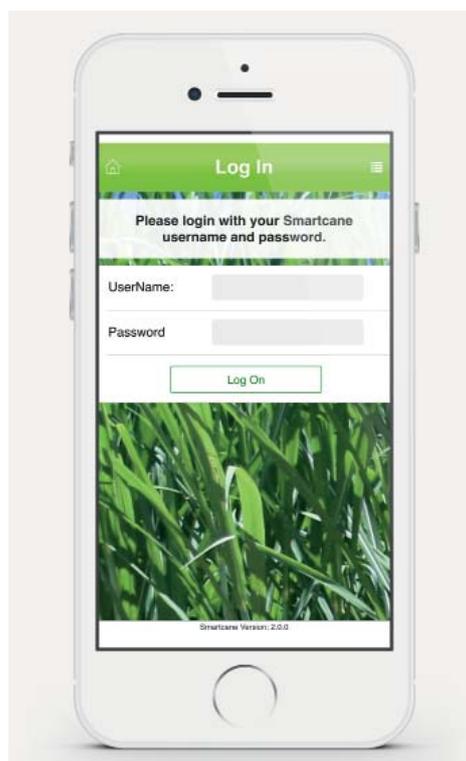
Deputy Chairman, Jeffrey Day is a third generation farmer in the Mulgrave zone and has watched farming practices voluntarily evolve and improve over the years.

"It's great that the BMP program gives growers the opportunity to show the rest of the world what we are already doing," he said.

"Our own farming practices have come a long way over the 60 years that our family has been on the farm and I'm proud to have that recognised through the BMP program."

CANEGROWERS Cairns Region Manager Sarah Standen is confident that a focus on the Drainage and Irrigation module in the first instance is a great way to encourage growers to undertake the Smartcane BMP program.

She is confident that growers will continue to work through the other two core modules and is seeing enthusiasm for the process among growers.■



**The Smartcane BMP app is available from Google Play for Android and the iTunes app store for Apple.**

## SRA on board as Smartcane BMP training partner

*Training for farmers and industry advisors alike is set to be ramped up under a new agreement between Smartcane BMP and Sugar Research Australia.*



A two-year agreement has been negotiated between the organisations and Dr Andrew Ward, who manages SRA's Professional and Extension Communication Unit, says it's a good fit for both.

"Smartcane is a key industry program, we have a range of skills in the core areas it covers and this agreement gives us another mechanism through which we can interact with advisors and growers," he said.

Dr Ward is expecting there'll be two components to SRA's involvement.

"One component is around train the train-

er type work, building on workshops we've already held for advisors in the industry, to make sure that extension providers are skilled in those key water quality areas," Dr Ward says.

"The other component will be around grower training, particularly in the areas of nutrient management and pesticide management, and we're trying to get a feel for demand.

"We want to develop a program that meets demand and Smartcane practice requirements but also complements other programs that are already available within industry and already underway by SRA around, for example Six Easy Steps."

Dr Ward says details of how the training under the Smartcane BMP contract will be designed and delivered will become clearer after the end of April after industry's needs are evaluated.■

*For further information contact Sugar Research Australia or your local Smartcane BMP facilitator.*



## Farm Economic Analysis Tool

### Version 3 now available

The free Farm Economic Analysis Tool (FEAT) Version 3 is now available and designed specifically for the Queensland sugar industry.

DAF Agricultural Economist Alison Collier said FEAT helped cane farmers and industry advisors tackle both simple and complex management decisions, and could be used to gauge the economic impact of best practice farming.

"FEAT has a variety of additional functions and can also be used to evaluate farm labour requirements, prepare cash flow budgets, analyse farm profitability and determine machinery contracting rates," she said.

"FEAT Version 3 builds on previous versions of FEAT, based on the advice and feedback of existing users.

"The new version features an improved layout, simple data entry and easy to interpret outputs".

A step-by-step FEAT User Guide accompanies the new version making FEAT Version 3 even more accessible to both new and existing users.

To download your free copy of FEAT Version 3 and the FEAT User Guide visit [www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au). ■

### FEAT Regional Scenarios

Are you a sugarcane grower or industry advisor in the Burdekin, Mackay or Tully region? If so, the Farm Economic Analysis Tool (FEAT) Regional Scenarios are for you.

FEAT is an economic decision support tool for cane farmers and was developed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF).

The new FEAT Regional Scenarios provide an overview of the economics of sugarcane farming in four North Queensland regions; the Burdekin Delta, Burdekin BRIA, Mackay and Tully.

Each scenario provides an example of the operating costs, overhead costs and long-term average yield data based on industry best practice farming.

FEAT Regional Scenarios are readily adaptable to your farm - making FEAT quicker and simpler to use.

By selecting the relevant Regional Scenario, adjusting farm area, yield data and farm operations as required, FEAT users can determine the profitability of their own farm with ease.

FEAT Regional Scenarios were developed in consultation with local growers and industry experts and are provided free of charge to the Queensland sugar industry.

To download the FEAT Regional Scenario for your region visit the DAF website, [www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au). DAF economists Alison Collier and Matthew Thompson are available to assist with all FEAT enquiries.

Contact them on 3330 4560

Email [alison.collier@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:alison.collier@daf.qld.gov.au) or [matthew.thompson@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:matthew.thompson@daf.qld.gov.au). ■

For more information please contact your local Smartcane BMP facilitator

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