Frost freezes harvest hopes

Grower passes three key BMP modules
In recent years how we farm has been dictated by others. As Australian farmers, we would much rather have a system which works for us. A system which is about improving our bottom line and one we can use to market our sugar to the world.

The Australian sugarcane industry has worked together and built just such a system. Smartcane BMP.

Smartcane BMP will help Australia maintain its competitive edge in the increasingly competitive world market. Being able to show we are productive and sustainable producers of quality sugar is becoming increasingly important to our customers, and the Smartcane BMP system is the way we are going to show just that.
The Queensland Government inquiry into sugar marketing is a positive step. CANEGROWERS will urge intervention to ensure growers are not at a commercial disadvantage when dealing with millers.

Paul Schembri
CANEGROWERS Chairman
This edition of Australian Canegrower celebrates the first grower to be accredited in the three key modules of Smartcane – the industry’s own Best Management Practice program. On page 9, project co-ordinator Malcolm Petrie explains why it’s an important step and on page 18 you can meet the grower, Michael Pisano, and read about his farm.

This edition our advertising feature is Irrigation Parts and Equipment. Along with information from a range of suppliers and contractors, there’s some dry season irrigation advice from SRA and from a project in the Burnett Mary Region some tips on making irrigation infrastructure more resilient to flooding.

Drought and now frost have affected many farms in the southern growing regions. For some it’s been the worst cold and dry spell they can remember. One grower talks about the impact on his cane and harvest on page 4. For a summary of what’s been happening across the CANEGROWERS districts, turn to page 6.

And remember the grower featured in a recent magazine planning to inter-plant his cane with a range of other species? The seeds have sprouted now so there’s an update to his story on page 21.

I hope you enjoy this magazine.

Neroli

STL proposes reduced quorum

At its AGM on October 21 2014, Sugar Terminals Ltd is proposing to reduce the quorum at its Shareholder Meetings from 10 grower shareholders to 2 and from 3 miller shareholders to 2.

Since 2000, STL, representing grower and miller shareholders, has owned six bulk sugar terminals in Queensland located at the ports of Cairns, Mourilyan, Lucinda, Townsville, Mackay, and Bundaberg. The terminals are managed by Queensland Sugar Limited under a leasing arrangement with STL.

In recent times, STL says it has struggled to achieve a quorum of members attending its AGM. While many shareholders have given a proxy to the Chairman, the Chairman’s attendance only counts as one attendee for the purpose of the quorum requirement, irrespective of the number of proxies he holds.

STL’s General Manager, Richard Farquhar, says failure to achieve a quorum would be both inconvenient and costly to the company as no business can be transacted and the meeting must be rescheduled.

While the STL Directors encourage shareholders to attend shareholder meetings, they understand that this is often not convenient or possible.

Mr Farquhar says the reduction in quorum numbers will bring STL into line with many other publicly listed companies including Qantas and Bank of Queensland.

Any questions on this proposed change can be directed to:

Richard Farquhar, at r.farquhar@sugarterminals.com.au

or to either of the STL grower representative directors:

Con Christofides conachristofides@bigpond.com and Drew Watson drew@briebrie.com.

Aim to resolve heavy issues

CANEGROWERS Herbert River Director Vince Russo and Manager Peter Sheedy talk heavy vehicle permits with Transport and Main Roads (TMR) officials Paul Langton and Ray Blain (centre).

The meeting was organised to address issues experienced with the change to a National Heavy Vehicle Regulator issuing permits instead of local police. The TMR officials were shown large equipment that exceed the dimensions covered for movement of agricultural combinations.

Peter Sheedy reports the meeting was constructive and he’s optimistic that there is a will amongst policy makers to find workable solutions for balancing the risks that must be managed and allowing industry to function.
Marketing inquiry is a positive step

By Paul Schembri
CANEGROWERS Chairman

The Queensland Government’s decision to intervene in the marketing dispute engulfing the Queensland sugar industry should give growers some comfort that there will now be a detailed assessment of the situation and the suitability of current marketing arrangements.

Growers should clearly understand that the state government’s intervention is not destined to lead to a return of full statutory single desk marketing, but it is an attempt to ensure that growers are not at a commercial disadvantage when dealing with regional monopoly milling companies.

It is rather interesting of late that agricultural marketing has captured a number of headlines in the mainstream media. Andrew “Twiggy” Forrest, the mining magnate, has publicly indicated that single desk marketing for Australian agriculture is necessary for the development of agriculture.

The Queensland Government has announced the framework for its important marketing review.

CANEGROWERS, jointly with ACFA, will make detailed submissions to the Queensland Government and appear before the Queensland Cabinet Agriculture Committee.

Carbon tax

The recent decision by the federal government to repeal the carbon tax can only be a positive for the sugar industry. The carbon tax had been simply another layer of cost that cane farmers have had to absorb onto our economic bottom lines.

Our economic modelling has indicated that the cost to the cane growing sector of the tax was approximately $80 million over five years. This equates roughly to a tax impost of around 50 cents per tonne of cane.

The repeal of the carbon tax will provide some relief to irrigators who are now facing a 10% increase in power bills instead of the forecast 15% increase to what are known as transitional tariffs.

This will provide small but nonetheless some relief to hard pressed irrigators.

CANEGROWERS has appeared before the Queensland Government’s Agricultural Cabinet Committee and, along with QFF, asked for it to pass the entire benefit of the repeal on to all electricity users, including irrigators. Such an action would mean prices should rise by no more than 3%. We will continue to monitor prices to ensure that the impact of the abolition of the carbon tax is passed on to farmers.

NFF

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the National Farmers Federation Policy Council meeting in Cairns. The meeting was attended by farm leaders from all over Australia.

The NFF is a relatively effective organisation given the limited amount of annual funding it operates with. Whilst many farmers would be quick to point out shortcomings of the organisation, it can influence government policy in key areas.

I have no hesitation in saying that the diesel fuel rebate would probably have been removed from the tax system had it not been for the quick and decisive action by NFF to rally support in Canberra for it to be retained.

The NFF is currently reviewing its structure and effectiveness. We at CANEGROWERS will contribute to this review constructively to ensure that NFF continues its advocacy for farmers at a national level.

Sugar consumption

One of the greatest threats facing the global sugar industry is the constant and escalating debate about sugar consumption and health and nutrition. From relative obscurity five years ago, this world wide debate has shaken the sugar world.

Recently at a World Association of Beet and Cane Growers meeting in Brussels the issue was canvassed. As well, the Global Sugar Alliance dedicated a full session to discuss and propose strategies to blunt the impact of the anti-sugar campaign.

At the prompting of Australia, one of the first steps in this global response is for all the sugar producing countries to exchange information, experiences and strategies as to how producing countries are responding to the demonising of sugar.

As you would be aware the Australian sugar industry has allocated funding to a dedicated sugar and nutrition strategy and you should have seen articles in the Australian Canegrower which are part of this strategy. The articles have sought to dispel, with science, some of the myths surrounding sugar consumption.

All of us in the sugar industry have substantial investments in the value chain and unless the sugar industry responds, no one else will put our case for us. Finally, I am pleased that the global sugar industry is moving to act in a more co-ordinated way to this ever present threat to the sugar industry.

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Paul Schembri, CANEGROWERS Chairman

“Growers should clearly understand that the state government’s intervention is not destined to lead to a return of full statutory single desk marketing.”
Frost freezes harvest hopes

By Amy Claireton

Frosts across southern growing regions have dealt another blow to many drought-affected crops. Across the Bundaberg, Isis, Maryborough and Rocky Point districts, growers are beginning to count the cost of their worst growing season for many years.

Michael and Leanne Robertson own and lease about 500 ha of cane land from Curra, near Gympie to Wallaville, between Gin Gin and Childers. There’s two hours drive from the northern holding to the southern one and it would be reasonable to expect that at least one of the farms would be experiencing good conditions. The dry and cold weather, however, has been very widespread and is affecting cane supplied to MSF in Maryborough, the Isis Mill, both the Binger and Millaquin mills near Bundaberg and the Rocky Point Mill.

Michael says this year’s cold snaps have brought frost to his home farm in the Bauple area for the first time in his life.

“The short, moisture-stressed cane, dry ground and dry trash all seem to worsen the effect of frosts,” he says. “We have had a couple of severe frosts this winter and each one kills more of the cane stick.”

The first frost event often kills the growing tips and prevents any late growth but each subsequent frost can kill more of the eyes along the stick and will affect the availability of good quality planting material for next season. Michael expects some farmers, including themselves, will be forced to cart planting material some distance for the next planting.

“Some varieties are less damaged but none could be considered ‘good’ in frost,” he says. “In frost prone blocks we try to avoid varieties such as Q138 that are very susceptible but we don’t have much of that variety anywhere now.”

This season has been very harsh on all varieties although Michael says their main variety, Q208, has withstood the dry conditions better than any others they have planted.

He acknowledges that the full extent of the damage will not be known until the harvesters start work, but he fears the worst. Across all their farms he estimates that around 70% of the cane will be frost-affected, some blocks more severely damaged than others.

Having access to water to irrigate some of the farms at Bauple, Curra and Wallaville has not been of great benefit this season. Michael says that for all the water they have poured on, the cane just doesn’t respond without some help from the sky.

“There is not much difference between the irrigated cane and the cane on our dryland farms. We expect that there will be some blocks that will not be economical to harvest and they will have to be slashed.”

“Across all our farms we expect to cut less than half of our average tonnage of around 28,000 tonnes this year,” he says.

On the Wallaville farms there is a stark contrast in the cane growing on Michael and Leanne’s farm and one owned by son, Geoffrey, with just a road in between. Plant cane has stood up to frost better than older cane. One of the worst affected blocks has been cut early to salvage as much cane as possible, with the third ratoon crop cutting 65 t/ha instead of the 100 t/ha that would be expected in a ‘normal’ year. The plant cane across the road is expected to yield 70 tonnes/ha.

Isis farmers hit hard

CANEGROWERS Isis Manager, Wayne Stanley, is very concerned for the farmers along the Burnett River supplying the Isis Mill who have
Anthony Robertson says the growing tip is dead on an estimated 70% of the cane crop on his parents farm. A series of cold snaps has killed more nodes down the stalks making the cane unsuitable for use as plants.

faced a series of extreme weather events over the past few years.

“It started with the flooding associated with Cyclone Yasi in the 2010–11 summer that affected the 2011 crop. Then, the extreme flooding in 2013 after Cyclone Oswald destroyed crops on all the same farms and several farms that had never flooded before, affecting the 2013 crop.

“Now in 2014 the whole region is suffering drought conditions but the same river farms have been dealt the additional blow of severe frosting.”

Wayne believes these events have had a crippling effect on farm businesses across the region and hopes there is financial assistance for these families.

“Additional debt is not the answer for these businesses. Considerable farm income losses this year, combined with additional expenses associated with re-establishing or re-planting crops, threaten the viability of many enterprises. Some families will need assistance with basic living expenses.”

There is also a knock-on effect; cane harvesting contractors have less cane to cut and are forced to lay off staff and pay for machinery sitting idle, and the mill has lower throughput and a shorter season, affecting seasonal workers.

“Our mill is working on a 16 week harvest and expects to cut less than a million tonnes, well down on our record production of over 1.5 million tonnes in 2012 when the farms that were not flood affected had a good year,”

Wayne says he is adamant that government should include both drought and frost in the definition of ‘natural disaster’, like fire, flood and cyclone, because the consequence is the same—no cane, no income.

Sugar Research Australia has an information sheet to help growers identify and manage frost damaged cane.


SWEET DEALS ON HOWARD SLASHERS

EHD SLASHER

- EHD slasher come with front and rear chain guards
- TWO YEAR gearbox warranty
- Dual wheels included with 210, 300, and 380 models

HD SLASHER

- Galvanised 5mm body with reinforced full length gussets and three plate friction clutch.
- Ideal for scrub, regrowth, or just an overgrown paddock.
- Front chain and rear rubber debris guards are standard.

NUGGET SLASHER

- Nuggets outperform all slasher within their price range.
- Budget priced slasher with a HOWARD pedigree.
- Front chain and rear rubber debris guards are standard.

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*HP rating unlimited provided friction plate clutch is correctly adjusted.
**CANEGROWERS Regional Round-Up**

*Supplied by CANEGROWERS district offices*

**Mossman**

After 12 weeks, Mossman Mill has processed 336,524 tonnes of cane for a mill average of 12.32 CCS. Mechanical issues continue to plague operations, slowing the harvest and producing high levels of delayed cane. The estimate has been reduced slightly to 1,244,000 tonnes of cane but the expected finish date remains in December 2014. The cane is being supplied is roughly 50/50 from Coast and Tableland areas with the Coastal Pool Averaging 11.32 CCS and the Tableland Pool Averaging 13.29 CCS.

**Cairns Region**

Harvesting and field operations are being hampered by wet weather in some parts of the region.

The Federal Government’s Reef Programme Round 7 results have been very pleasing and growers in both the Burdekin and Babinda zones are keen to start their projects. Any growers who have yet to return their Round 6 contracts are urged to do so.

**Tully**

The Tully Show cane display was a great success, thanks to the efforts of grower exhibitors, staff of Tully Sugar and Tully Productivity Services and the judges. Winner of the Tom Elston Memorial trophy was E. & V.A Skocaj. The display was complemented with a cane-based colouring in competition, and an essay competition on the theme of “How are sugar cane farmers improving practices and technology.” Grade 7 student from Lower Tully State School Ashlee Watson was the winner with a well-researched composition.

On the harvest front, the show holiday gave the crews a break and an opportunity for maintenance. The estimate is for a crop of over 2.5 million tonnes providing the weather holds. Showers have caused some disruption this week to the northern part of the area.

**Burdekin**

At the end of week 9, 2,563m tonnes has been crushed which represents 32% of the season’s 7.9m tonne estimate. The crop is continuing to cut slightly ahead of estimate at 101.3%. Weekly average CCS for the region has steadily climbed to 14.5.

The region has enjoyed 6 weeks of sunshine. If the mills maintain their 385m tonne average crush per week, and the ideal weather conditions continue, the crush could be completed by mid-November.

Grower Peter Papadimitruou has initiated a recycling service for agriculture plastic materials including old irrigation fluming and poly pipe, chemical drums and fertiliser bags.

The free service is well timed given the move to one use or single trip fertiliser bags. It is estimated that approximately 40,000 tonnes of fertiliser is used by the cane industry in the Burdekin annually which equates to 40,000 bags that need to be recycled.

**Herbert River**

The Herbert reached 25% of its estimated crop harvested on Friday August 8. Crushing rates have been down due to the difficulties of harvesting flood and cyclone affected cane making and Victoria Mill experiencing problems with new work on it’s a side milling tandem.

Reports from members who attended small group meetings indicate that Wilmar’s consultants were left in no doubt about their view of the company’s marketing proposal – that growers hold grave concerns about the conflict of interest Wilmar would have and want their economic interest sugar marketed by their choice of agent.

**Proserpine**

Ideal harvesting conditions over the past fortnight have enabled 175,740 tonnes of cane to be processed through Proserpine Mill, bringing the total for the season to date to 473,050 tonnes. Average CCS currently sits at 13.82. Varieties kQ228 and Q183 continue to be the stand-out performers in respect to CCS.

Frost damage has been identified in some varieties and every effort is being made to harvest this cane promptly. The district is currently experiencing some light showers with more rain forecast over the next fortnight.

Mackay

Mackay’s mills crushed just less than 238,000 tonnes for the week ending August 3, bringing the total for the season for the three mills to 1,669,251 tonnes of the estimated 5,440,000 tonnes.

There were some issues during the week including a broken bagasse reclamer chain at Farleigh Mill, which reduced throughput. Racecourse has been limited by the evaporator throughput again. Marian Mill also experienced a bagasse reclamer chain failure. PRS for the week was 13.76 with the average to date 12.72. CCS was 13.47 for the week with the average to date 12.54.

Throughput at Plane Creek Mill for the week ending August 2 was 66,138 tonnes bringing the season to date total to 321,999 tonnes. CCS was 14.15 with the season to date average at 13.73 units. The highest CCS sample for the week was from a rake of second ratoon KQ228 from the Carmila productivity district measuring 16.28 units.
Bundaberg

At total of 82,074 tonnes of cane was crushed at the Bundaberg Sugar mills last week with an average CCS of 14.30. This brings the season to date tonnes crushed to 301,069, approximately 20% of the estimated crop.

CCS has been above average for this time of year. Both mills' weekly average is around 14.00 and steadily increasing. We have adjusted the base CCS up to 14.00. The highest average CCS for the week was 14.78 units from 700 tonnes of Q235A while the highest individual CCS for the week of 16.80 units was from an old ratoon of Q235A. Variety KQ228A has dominated supply accounting for over 40% with a CCS average of 14.47 units.

Crop estimates are holding and in some cases have increased by 20%. Considering the growing season that we have all endured, the end result looks like it may be better than we first thought, especially if the CCS continues to rise.

Isis

The crushing season is plodding along, and Isis Mill has crushed 220,000 after the first four weeks at a seasonal average CCS of 13.2. Priority harvesting has been given to frosted cane. Much of the Isis crop is drought stressed with some growers contemplating further irrigations to the standing crop prior to harvest.

Growers are preparing for the spring plant and Isis Productivity Limited reminds growers about their plant order forms. It is likely the plant distribution will occur in the first week of September. Growers are reminded to sign their Sugar Cane Trash Agreements before August 31 to get the best price for the next 3 years.

Isis Mill had a birthday on July 16. It was 120 years since the company was registered.

Rocky Point

The Rocky Point crush is due to commence on Tuesday 12 August 2014 with an estimate of 172,000 tonnes. A short harvest week has been implemented to reduce overtime costs in the milling sector, with a 10 week season expected. With the severe cold of late, we have some frosted cane. The rest of the crop is severely drought-affected, making this our worst crop on record.

New South Wales

The week ending August 3 saw the Harwood crush reach 9.3%. Broadwater 13.4% and Condong 30.6%. Average CCS at Harwood was 11.14 while it was 11.08 at Broadwater and 10.12 at Condong. Crushing rates were 181 t/hr at Harwood, 223 t/hr at Broadwater and 181 t/hr at Condong.

Harwood experienced good reliability. Broadwater experienced a frustrating week for stops and Condong experienced above average throughput.

The Bush Fire Danger Period commenced at the start of August and growers are being issued fire permits to allow the burning of pre-harvest cane.
Information rich and knowledge poor

By Burn Ashburner
Economics & Industry, CANEGROWERS

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change,” wrote Charles Darwin as he put forward his theory of evolution.

There is no doubt that the sugarcane industry is in the middle of a significant era of change. The reality of deregulation is starting to manifest itself and society’s awareness and expectations of environmental issues is being expressed. While our industry, and growers in particular, can fight this, at some stage there is also a need to adapt and perhaps to do so with more speed than we would like.

If we take on board the sentiment of the quote at the beginning of this article, the growers who survive are likely to be adaptable, keen to learn new things, and be looking for new ideas.

I think there are plenty of growers who fit this description. There is constant pressure on growers to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability just for survival. And I believe, in general, growers are good at this and those who were not good at adapting are no longer farming.

Currently there is pressure on water use efficiency with rising electricity and water prices and nitrogen use efficiency with the need to reduce dissolved inorganic nitrogen getting to the Great Barrier Reef.

As an industry we are blessed with a significant amount of information and the potential (with not too much effort) to gather more. Growers in all (or at least most) mill areas have access to productivity information and coupled with improved consignment information, this is extremely powerful. There are a number of farm input recording systems available (AgDat being one which is available across most of the industry), which are becoming much more user friendly as we get mobile apps.

Very little of this potential and information has translated into something growers use and value. However it will need to be part of the adaption process, and as an industry, we need to mine this information better to turn it into knowledge which is useful.

We always talk about productivity and I thought it worth exploring what this means. Many growers judge how well they are doing based on gut feel and experience. These definitely have a place but in a changing world, perhaps they need to be combined with more analysis.

Productivity is the output divided by input. In the case of water use efficiency a measure of productivity would be the tonnes of cane per ML of water (effective rainfall and irrigation). For example 130 tonnes cane /ha grown with 13 ML of water gives 10.0 tonnes cane per ML of water.

Thus an improvement in productivity could be:

• Higher yield with the same water - 140 tc with 13 ML = 10.8 tc / ML
• Same yield with less water -130 tc with 12 ML = 10.8 tc / ML
• Less yield with proportionately less water -125 tc with 11.5 ML = 10.9 tc / ML
• Proportionately higher yield with more water -140 tc with 13.5 ML = 10.4 tc / ML
• More yield with less water – 140 tc with 12.5ML = 11.2 tc/ML

This is generally known as the crop water index (CWI). If you want to measure your water productivity you need to have records of your effective rainfall and irrigation water applied and the yield from that block. This is particularly useful if you benchmark it with other blocks and other growers. This information is also useful in dryland areas. If your productivity is way below the benchmark then you can start to look for reasons why.

Nitrogen productivity can also be reported to growers. The measure of productivity for nitrogen that I have used in the past has been tonnes cane/ha/100kg of nitrogen applied. As an example, if you get 80 tonnes cane by applying 160kgs N the productivity measure would be 50 tc/ha/100kgs N. Again if the productivity is going to improve you would want:

• More yield /ha for same N applied – 90tc/ha with 160kgs N = 56tc/ha/100kg N
• Same yield /ha for less N applied – 80 tc/ha with 140kgs N = 57tc/ha/100kg N
• Less yield /ha for proportionately less N applied = 70 tc/ha with 120 kg N = 54tc/ha/100kg N
• Proportionately more yield / ha than N applied – 100tc/ha with 170kgs N = 59tc/ha/100kg N
• More yield/ha with less N – 90tc/ha with 150kg N = 60tc/ha/100kg N

To have any idea of your nitrogen use efficiency you would need to keep records of the applied nitrogen and the yield. Again, this information is really useful if you can benchmark it against other growers with similar conditions.

I realize that this is a level of detail not often used by cane growers but I have tried to illustrate that the level of detail that cane growing may require in the future to assist in adapting to change. There are also a wide range of other variables and seasonal influences and remember this must translate into profitability which is price quantity.

Perhaps the computer savvy next generation will be the ones to find the full value from all of this information by turning it into knowledge!
Herbert River grower reaches Smartcane BMP milestone

Smartcane BMP has accredited its first farmer in the three ‘key’ modules.

Michael Pisano has been accredited in the Soil Health and Plant Nutrition Management, Pest, Disease and Weed Management and Drainage and Irrigation Management modules. He farms east of Ingham and is a CANEGROWERS Herbert River Director and CANEGROWERS Policy Councillor.

BMP project co-ordinator Malcolm Petrie has congratulated Michael saying that, by becoming accredited, he has provided strong leadership to the industry.

“I appreciate his commitment and perseverance in demonstrating that accreditation can be achieved and for providing positive and proactive feedback,” he said.

“As the first grower, he has provided valuable insight on further refining the Smartcane accreditation process and into the value of the support role the facilitators can play in gathering the information needed to support his application.”

Malcolm is encouraging other growers to follow Michael’s lead and move the industry towards the removal of government regulations.

“This first, important accreditation in the three key modules demonstrates both the program’s rigour and achievability.

“Growers should be recognised for what they do and this program proves to government and their communities that the industry is doing what it says it is doing – looking after the environment while being productive and profitable.”

While Michael didn’t have to change any of his farming practices to achieve accreditation, Malcolm says some growers working through the modules will identify areas in which they can seek support and access industry training.

“For industry, Smartcane BMP opens up opportunities to access additional funding through avenues such as the Australian Government Reef Programme and it will play a big part in helping Australian sugar meet the future market requirements of its key customers.”

To date 549 farms, a total of 86,027 hectares, is registered in the industry’s best management practice program. Read more about Michael Pisano on page 16.
Market Update

By Matthew Page, Treasury Analyst

Current as of 11 August 2014

Market Commentary

Sugar

The past fortnight has seen the raw sugar market in a downtrend. The October ‘14 contract has fallen 100 points to close on Friday at 16.14 c/lb while the March and May ‘15 contracts have also given up significant ground (minus 99 and 84 points).

A fire in a Rumo sugar warehouse at the Santos Port in Brazil, last weekend, provided the market with some excitement on Monday with prices spiking about 60 points in early trade. This was however short lived as momentum quickly turned and prices finished lower on the day. This set the tone for the week and typified the overwhelming bearish sentiment in the market at present.

The flat price is working lower to try and find some physical demand, however we are still seeing little indication of the big buyers coming to market at these levels. With more than 1 million tonnes of Thai raw sugar still to find a home, we are seeing the OCT/MAR spread widen as the threat of these sugars being delivered to the October tape increases and the problem rolls over to the first quarter of 2015.

The story in Brazil remains unchanged with production rattling along just ahead of last year, whilst most of the market expects a short tail and a lower overall yield of just over 32 million tonnes. This is not helping the current oversupply situation.

As such, we anticipate that the move higher will still occur, however not likely until early next year once the decline in Brazilian production feeds into the supply chain and the issue of the surplus Thai sugar is resolved. For now, we expect to see prices trending at the lower-end of the range.

Currency

The Australian dollar is remaining relatively stable against the Greenback. Geo-political issues continue to weigh on risk appetite.

Data out of the US has begun to ramp-up, suggesting an acceleration in the economic recovery, whilst some of our own local data has been a little disappointing. This has seen the exchange rate dip slightly lower over the fortnight to around the US 93 cent level.

Although still at uncomfortable levels for Australian exporters, we expect to see the Australian dollar come off later this year. The quantitative easing program in the US is scheduled to wind-up before the end of 2014 and following this, we see potential for US rate hikes as we move into 2015.

While all care is taken in the preparation of this report the reliability or accuracy of the information provided in the document is not guaranteed. QSL does not accept any responsibility to any person for the decisions and actions taken by that person with respect to any of the information contained in this report.
QSL Grower Representative Members appointed

By Cathy Kelly & Carla Keith
Industry Relationship Managers

The election process for Queensland Sugar Limited (QSL) grower representative members has now been completed. As a result, QSL has 21 Grower Representative Members who have been appointed to their positions for a three-year term, commencing August 2014. The nomination and votes received by QSL were tallied, counted and signed off by an independent scrutineer.

QSL Grower Representative Members are a vital communication link between QSL and growers throughout Queensland. This link is vital now more than ever with the ongoing developments in Queensland’s sugar marketing arrangements for the future and QSL’s continued advocacy for grower choice. We encourage growers throughout the state to reach out to their local QSL Grower Representative Member and provide them with feedback.

The role of the QSL Grower Representative Member has evolved over the last twelve months. Thank you to QSL’s former representatives who worked with QSL to further enhance the role. During their tenure, two-way flow of information between QSL and growers has been enhanced and several workshops were held to provide further insight into QSL’s services and obtain valuable feedback.

Going forward, QSL Grower Representative Members have an important role in providing direct feedback to QSL on behalf of growers and in sharing information that QSL provides on its latest updates, value offerings and activities.

QSL is committed to providing Grower Representative Members with an understanding of the services we offer, listen when feedback is provided and keep representatives updated on QSL’s activities.

The first official duty of QSL’s Grower Representative Members will be to attend the QSL Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 20 October 2014 in Brisbane.

Under our constitution, Grower Representative Members consist of one representative from each single mill area, and where a mill area is part of a mill group (eg Burdekin), a number of representatives from the mill area equal to the number of mills in the mill group. In addition, there is a representative from CANEGROWERS and Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA). This brings the total QSL Grower Representative Member positions to 23.

If you would like further information, please don’t hesitate to contact either of us on Cathy Kelly (0409 285 074 / cathy.kelly@qsl.com.au) or Carla Keith (0409 372 305 / carla.keith@qsl.com.au).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mill Area</th>
<th>Grower Representative Member</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mossman</td>
<td>Mossman Mill</td>
<td>Gerard Puglisi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tableland</td>
<td>Tableland Mill</td>
<td>Nirmal Chohan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mulgrave</td>
<td>Mulgrave Mill</td>
<td>Jeffrey Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>South Johnstone Mill</td>
<td>Barry Stubbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tully</td>
<td>Tully Mill</td>
<td>Thomas Harney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert River</td>
<td>Victoria and Macknade mills</td>
<td>Michael Pisano and Vince Russo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdekin</td>
<td>Kalamia, Invicta, Pioneer and Inkerman mills</td>
<td>Russell Jordan, Roger Piva, David Lando, Ramon Poli</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proserpine</td>
<td>Proserpine Mill</td>
<td>Mark Blair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Farleigh, Marian and Racecourse mills</td>
<td>Anthony Ross, Frank Perna, and Philip Deguara</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plane Creek</td>
<td>Plane Creek Mill</td>
<td>Kevin Borg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Bingera and Millaquin mills</td>
<td>Tony Castro and Kelvin Griffin</td>
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<td>Isis</td>
<td>Isis Mill</td>
<td>Joe Russo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryborough</td>
<td>Maryborough Mill</td>
<td>Jeffrey Atkinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocky Point</td>
<td>Rocky Point Mill</td>
<td>Richard Skopp</td>
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</table>

Note: CANEGROWERS and ACFA each occupy one Grower Member position each

Grower Representative Members highlighted have been re-elected to serve another three-year term in their region.
Dry season irrigation tips

By Brad Hussey, Development Officer – Farming Systems and Irrigation, SRA

To make the most of available irrigation allocations and achieve the highest possible yields it is important that irrigation is used to supplement rainfall during the dry winter and spring periods. There is little to be gained by saving water for a rainy day.

Aiming to irrigate during the dry season to establish a good healthy stand of cane which will make better use of the wet season rainfall when it arrives, is good practice. Standing cane should also be irrigated to promote growth and maintain condition until harvest.

Irrigation of young ratoons

The new ratoon crop is the basis of your next season’s harvest. The faster ratoons get away, the greater chance they have of producing a high yield. Young ratoon crops have limited leaf area and limited root systems and therefore require less water than a crop at full canopy. In the early part of the season the young ratoon will only require between one and two millimetres of water per day. Over time, this adds up with the young ratoon requiring between 30 and 60mm of water per month.

Watering ratoons early to get them well established before the wet season will give you the best chance of a high yield. Cane which is well-established before the wet season is better able to withstand waterlogging events which may occur during the season.

Irrigation of standing cane

As we continue through the drier part of the year – winter and spring – the maturing cane crop is still using water. Maturing cane crops will still require between two to three mm per day of plant available water and while is this much less than the crop requires in the summer months, it adds up over time.

The standing crop waiting for harvest can still use between 60 and 90mm of soil water per month, and in the process can add an additional five to 10 tonnes per hectare, per month, to the yield. With the harvest period in most districts running over a five to six month period a considerable amount of cane can be grown during the harvest period if the crop is kept in good condition.

Dry down times

The sugar content of cane can be increased by inducing a period of water stress prior to the harvest date. A drying off period of six to eight weeks is usually sufficient to aid in increasing the sugar content while still maintaining the yield potential of the cane. If cane is dried down for too long before harvest it can impact on the establishment of the young ratoon crop.

When the crop is under very dry conditions, a better ratoon is often achieved by watering the standing cane with a light irrigation four to six weeks before harvest rather than watering the young ratoon crop after harvest.

Some practical advice

• Water standing cane during the harvest period to maintain growth and condition.
• Dry down cane six to eight week prior to harvest to increase sugar content.
• Water young ratoons to maximise yield.
• In very dry conditions a better ratoon may be established by watering the standing cane rather than the young ratoon.

So does irrigation pay?

The rising cost of electricity for pumping, and high water costs, have some growers wondering if irrigation is still a profitable operation. The answer to this question will depend on an individual’s farm operational costs, and the following information may help to make this decision.

The cost of irrigation

Water costs

Water charges are highly variable throughout the industry. In some regions, growers have access to low cost water from bores or unregulated streams, whereas in other regions growers who need to rely on irrigation schemes can pay from $50 to $120 per ML.

Pumping costs

Some growers are able to operate irrigation systems directly from the irrigation outlet with no pumping cost. A recent survey of electricity usage found that a typical low pressure system such as a centre pivot had a pumping cost of $55/ML, while a high pressure system such as a water winch had a pumping cost of $90 per ML.

Income growth from irrigation

The income produced as a result of irrigation can be measured by the cane yield response to applied water. Typically, cane yields are increased by six to 10 tonnes of cane for each ML of water applied. If cane is priced at $40/t and the harvesting cost is $10/t then an extra $30 of income can be generated for each additional tonne of cane grown.

### A few scenarios

<table>
<thead>
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<th>High pressure water winch</th>
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The cost of irrigation per hectare, per month, to the yield.

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Building flood resilience into irrigation

Record flooding devastated homes and farms across 80% of the Burnett Mary Region in southern Queensland in 2013. As part of the recovery process, one project in particular has been looking how to ensure that farm irrigation equipment can be made more resilient so it fares better in any future flooding event.

The Burnett Mary Regional Group was provided with funding by the Queensland and Australian governments under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery arrangements through the Queensland Reconstruction Authority.

Local Bundaberg firm Sunfam has presented at a series of workshops providing information and options for producers to look at ways not only to repair but to improve the efficiency of their current systems.

To date 43 site inspections have been conducted and 38 costed recommendations made based on the individual circumstances and requirements of the producer.

Limited disaster relief funding was available to offset the cost of upgrading some irrigation systems.

Matt Leighton of CANEGROWERS Bundaberg says many of the suggestions made by Ian Loeskow of Sunfam at the workshops could be transferred to other irrigation areas, especially where water is supplied from a river or creek.

“A general suggestion was to, if possible place pumping infrastructure on straight sections of the river or creek,” he says.

“Don’t put your pumping infrastructure on an outside bend in the river because that’s where the highest water velocity flows and this can damage the banks by either erosion or slumping resulting in loss of either the pump site and or irrigation equipment. There is also more debris swept to the outside of the bend that can damage the irrigation equipment,” he explains.

“If you’re placing irrigation equipment on the inside bank, try to place equipment just past the apex bend in the area where the water eddies. The water flow is more stable and there is less fast moving debris in the water behind the bend when compared to the front of the bend.”

Other recommendations include:

At the suction end - Angle irrigation infrastructure (pipes, lines etc) downstream (with the water flow) on a 30–45° angle so debris does not hang up on the infrastructure as easily. The use of poly foot valves secured by chains to pumps and pump sheds are also recommended as they are more likely to float and therefore be recovered.

Wiring - Look at waterproof plugs and connectors so that switchboards, pumps etc can be moved away where feasible and use barrier joiners to stop water moving up electrical wires and damaging all of the wiring.

Pumps and motors - Use the full suction capability of the pump so that it can be placed higher on the bank and further away from flood waters. This may reduce the times growers need to move the pump out of the river during flows in the river.

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To better support our distributors, Tipsa currently stocks all types of hoses and accessories in Australia.

BUILDING FLOOD RESILIENCE INTO IRRIGATION

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Installing irrigation mains quickly and efficiently

**Supplied by Drain Tech**

Drain Tech is a leader in the field of design and installation of sub-surface drainage systems and also uses their trenching expertise to install rising mains for irrigation systems. Drain Tech director, Richard Gloyne, urges landholders to consider trenching as an alternative to traditional excavation methods.

 Appropriately designed chain diggers are able to trench neatly and accurately, with or without grade control, and the trenching process reduces all material to a finely graded tilth. On many projects the cost of importing and placing bedding material can be avoided by using this excavated spoil as backfill.

Site re-instatement is another bonus with all excavated material able to be graded back over the pipe and crowned. Impact is confined to the immediate narrow trench so crop damage is minimised.

Drain Tech offers a complete excavate, install and close service that is popular with time poor landholders. Forward planning, however, is essential.

Factors that need consideration include: Route planning to consider materials required and existing underground services, provision for future extensions or branch lines, and a checklist for all components to be on site before excavation commences.

Drain Tech’s installation system involves the excavation and laying of the pre-assembled pipe in a continuous operation. We use a rolling pipe sling to gently lift the assembled pipe and lower it to the trench floor. Delays due to design changes and or component shortfalls can lead to expensive hold-ups with trench collapse or water ingress.

Like all capital works, prior planning produces an irrigation system that performs faultlessly and gives efficiencies into the future.

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**Drain Tech Pty Ltd**

- Sub-surface Drainage
- Irrigation Mains
- High Pressure Drain Jetting
- Survey and Design

Call Richard on 0428 528 054

or visit www.draintech.net.au
Diesel irrigation engines overcome costly problems

**Supplied by New Holland**

The constantly rising cost of electricity is an ever-greater concern and suppliers give no assurances that prices will stabilise or ease. So farmers needing to be even more watchful of their input costs are especially focused on effective irrigation solutions.

A recent study by Bundaberg Sugar Services showed that power represented up to 87% of the cost of electric irrigation pumping systems.

Adding to the problem, some growers have suffered a 90% increase in tariffs over the past seven years and they fear ongoing rises.

In a bid to contain costs, growers and contractors are increasingly switching to diesel-powered irrigation systems. This provides many operational and offset benefits, particularly for those using sprays or sprinklers.

“Operating costs are always very important to us. However, another major benefit is that we can move diesel irrigation engines anywhere they are needed,” said **Bob Johnson**, the founder of TEAM Irrigation.

Unless an electric engine is being used close to a three-phase power line, installation can be very expensive, sometimes more costly than the engine itself, and the cost is repeated at every new location.

“Diesel power for irrigation is highly portable and can be available even in the middle of a field. Just take the engine there in the ute, drop it off, hook it up and start to use it. If it is needed somewhere else, pick it up and repeat the process,” said **New Holland product manager Richard Palma**.

“Unlike electricity, there is no need to lodge time-consuming applications with the local authorities or hire qualified electricians to install safety switches and equipment and there’s no worries about blackouts or power lines coming down in a storm. It really is a very effective solution to many problems,” he said.

Today, there is a wide range of rugged, transportable diesel irrigation engines available from New Holland suitable for virtually all needs, situations and environmental conditions. New Holland engines have the additional advantage that they are delivered to users ready to use almost immediately.

“Importantly, diesel irrigation engines are absolutely reliable and worry-free,” said Richard.

He said that buyers of new irrigation engines from their local New Holland equipment dealers before 30 September this year could qualify for a bonus of a 200-litre ‘Dieselmaster’ Ute Pack worth $1,068.

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**NEW HOLLAND IRRIGATION ENGINES**

**DISCOVER THE BENEFITS AND REAP THE REWARDS**

**TRANSPORTABLE**

Take the engine wherever it’s needed

**EASY INSTALL**

No infrastructure, approvals, electricians or backup power required

**VERSATILE**

Customisable with silencers, weather protection and more

**RELIABLE**

No interruption in blackouts - our engines keep powering on

We’ve got an engine to suit your irrigation needs:

- 4-cylinder or 6-cylinder diesel
- 85 hp (66 kW) @ 2200 rpm through 240 hp (175 kW)
- Warranty 2 years /2000 hours (whichever occurs first)

See your local New Holland dealer, or visit newhollandparts.com.au

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18 August 2014 | Australian Canegrower | 15
Travel boosts irrigation business

Supplied by Thinkwater Whitsunday

Noel Gardner and the staff at Thinkwater Whitsunday, pride themselves on knowing the products they sell and being able to give their customers the best advice and service they can.

“We want to be able to tell our customers how something works, and why it is the most suitable product for their needs,” Noel says.

Thinkwater Whitsunday is the local Bauer agent for the supply, installation and servicing of pivots, laterals and hard hose irrigators. Following the principle of wanting to know as much as he can about the products he sells, Noel travelled to Austria in June this year to spend one week of intensive training on the full range of Bauer products. He gained a valuable insight into how everything is either manufactured or quality-controlled internally by Bauer.

On returning to Australia, Noel then attended an IAL course in evaporation and transpiration, run in conjunction with Griffith University and CSIRO. This course enabled Noel to gain a full understanding of the importance of evaporation and transpiration in relation to cropping and how to implement it to specific paddocks.

As part of the course, Noel now has access to a unique program that allows him to enter paddock specific data, to determine the evaporation and transpiration of any specific farmer’s paddock.

“Irrigation is such an important part of farming. We need to be smart and efficient in our water usage. This program can help us do that,” he says.

The combined benefit of these two courses will enable Noel and Bauer to design the best and most efficient irrigation system for any paddock.

So if you are thinking about new irrigation, or improving your current system, contact Noel at Thinkwater Whitsunday, and see how he can help you, with Bauer’s world leading technology.
New products designed to save energy, labour and water

**Supplied by Lindsay Corporation**

Lindsay Corporation, maker of Zimmatic irrigation systems, announces several additions to its Growsmart by Lindsay product line, including a soil moisture station, state-of-the-art weather station, and new magnetic flow meter.

All of these plug-and-play add-on products are made to work with Lindsay’s award-winning FieldNET wireless irrigation management system, which allows growers to remotely monitor and control their entire irrigation system. Richard Hall, Lindsay Regional Manager, Southeast Asia, Australia/New Zealand, says they will save growers time, energy, labor and water.

“Integrating the soil moisture monitor, the weather station and the flow meter with FieldNET is key and allows growers one easy-to-use platform that controls pumps and pivots, records water and energy usage, tracks soil moisture levels and trends, and logs local weather station information,” he says.

**Soil moisture monitor**

The soil moisture station provides continuous monitoring of soil moisture and helps growers make informed decisions to ensure irrigation is being applied in the right amount and at the right time.

When integrated with FieldNET, individual probes and sites can be named for quick reference and linked to the associated fields. Soil moisture trends are illustrated in easy-to-read graphs and provide current trending and season-over-season history.

**Weather station**

The state-of-the-art weather station includes sensors for wind speed and direction, solar radiation, air temperature, humidity, precipitation and calculated evapotranspiration. A low-maintenance tipping rain bucket is included as part of the weather station. Historical records are maintained for quick access, with trending charts together on one page.

**Magnetic flow meter**

Compared to propeller flow meters, the Growsmart magnetic flow meter does not have any moving parts such as propellers or bearings that may break, causing interruptions in water measurement and resulting in extra costs, according to Dirk Lenie, Lindsay Vice President, Global Marketing. The flow meter comes in a range of pipe sizes, and includes an optional battery pack.

For more information, visit www.growsmart.com or talk to your local Zimmatic dealer.

For more information, visit www.lindsay.com or talk to your local Zimmatic dealer.
First farmer past the post irons out some Smartcane hurdles

By Neroli Roocke

A spell of wet weather prompted Michael Pisano to become the first cane grower to be accredited in the three key Smartcane BMP modules.

The CANEGROWERS Herbert River Director and CANEGROWERS Policy Councillor was among the first farmers to register for the Smartcane BMP program soon after its launch.

Now he’s the first to have worked through and been audited in the three key modules in the program (out of the seven that make up Smartcane BMP).

And Michael didn’t have to change a thing about the way he farms; he just had to prove what he was doing.

“I’d done the initial workshop and then it sat there for about three months until we got some rainy weather and I decided to get stuck into it in the office,” Michael says.

“We were already using the best management practices on our farm. The biggest thing was coming to terms with all the recording that’s required and the evidence to show what we were doing.”

Michael admits he found the process a bit tough but is glad he’s worked through it.

“I had an ERMP already in place and I was keeping records of nutrients and spray records that were good for me but it wasn’t what the program wanted so it took a bit of working through to pull it together. I had to formalise, for example, my nutrient and weed management plans but now that it’s done I only have to update it each year.”

Being one of the first through the modules has meant Michael was a guinea pig for any teething problems the Smartcane website and its templates may have had.

“I think now that the templates are all in place it’s going to be a lot easier for...”
people to do. It’s definitely not a tick and flick program. The rigour in the program is such that you have to be spot-on. You’ve got to have the proof.

“I think over 90% of the growers in this district could look through and see that their practices meet the requirements.”

One of the issues Michael came up against was proving that he used clean seed cane, that’d been hot water treated. The treatment process is done at his local Victoria Mill but the cane hadn’t been supplied with any receipt, certificate or docket to say his farm had the treated cane.

“Everyone knows that it’s done but there’s no proof so I had to get the local Herbert Cane Productivity Services to write me a letter to say that it’d been done,” Michael says.

From this year, the HCPL will apply a sticker, bearing the Smartcane BMP logo, to crates to certify that the cane inside has been treated, naming the variety and the buyer.

“Growers from now on will have that little tag as proof that they’re using treated cane. It’s just been little things like that that’s taken time for me to work through.”

Farm profile

Michael and Linda Pisano’s farm at Braemeadows, east of Ingham, is one which was originally divided up for soldiers returning from the Second World War. It has no irrigation and produces 6,500-7,000 tonne on average from around 90 hectares.

This year though, Michael is only expecting to take off 6,000 tonnes after being affected by first sugarcane smut and then yellow canopy syndrome (YCS) in recent years.

“From about 2000 really it’s been one thing after another. We had orange rust then we got smut and had to get out of the susceptible varieties. Now yellow canopy has come in and I’ve got a couple of blocks of Q200 that will have very low tonnage this year. They’re that badly affected and that’s a variety I’ll have to move out of.

“It’ll take a while to build up again but I’ve got two new varieties that I’ll plant out this year and I’ve got three that I’ll get this year to try.”

Michael accessed Australian Government Reef Programme funding to modify his fertiliser box to incorporate a stool splitter.

Michael works closely with his nephew, Paul Marbelli, sharing machinery and labour across their farms as well as accessing grants or programs, including the Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue).

“That sort of thing has set us up for the future otherwise we would never have been able to do some of the changes on our own.”

All machinery used on Michael’s farm is on GPS with auto-steer and matched to the row spacings. Along with most growers in the Herbert River district, he made the switch to green cane cutting in the 1980s and has never looked back.

“It’s probably the biggest change in farming that I’ve seen that’s been of real benefit to us. In the 70s we had years where we had to destroy cane because it was burnt and then couldn’t be harvested for some reason or another. That doesn’t happen now. If it’s too wet to harvest you can just leave it, the contractor can go somewhere else and come back later.

“Trash blanketing keeps the moisture in during the dry parts of the year and in the wet season the soil doesn’t move,” he says.

“Trash also keeps grasses down - we hardly ever see narrow leaf weeds anymore. It’s just the broadleaf ones which sometimes get through and if they’re vines we have to stop them before they climb the cane and strangle it.

“My nephew and I have a high-rise tractor that we go through over the top ▶
of the cane and we will only spray where there is a weed. We only switch the pump on when there’s a patch where we can see a weed and spray that.

“Our chemical usage has dropped dramatically since we started with that machine about ten years ago.”

An Australian Government Reef Programme grant helped the pair adapt their fertiliser box to with stool splitters and Michael says generally one pass is enough. Funding has been secured through the latest round of the programme to go towards the purchase of a hooded spray unit.

Water works

Meandering through Michael’s farm are wide grassy lanes with swales and wetlands, flourishing with reeds, insects and waterlilies and home to flocks of ducks and other waterbirds. This is no haphazard arrangement; it was carefully designed under an 11 year program to amalgamate into one master plan all of the drainage across 14,500 hectares of farmland between Ingham and the ocean. New drainage lines were put in, wetlands were constructed and flood lifter pumps were installed to control, slow and filter the water.

Michael is the Chairman of the Lower Herbert Water Management Authority, the statutory board which now manages the flow of water across the landscape and coordinates the maintenance of the drainage lines. He believes the master plan has been a major contributor to improved productivity.

“These drainage lines are protected by law and they act as a filter system for the water. The local council came on board because it could see the whole community benefits – it’s not just an agricultural benefit.”
Mixed species trial raises its head

Can a salad mix of plant species improve soil health and nutrient availability for sugarcane?

That’s a question grower Simon Mattsson of Marian has been asking and Australian Canegrower can now update the story which featured him in the July 7 issue, just after he’d returned from his Nuffield Scholarship travels.

Simon has a mixture of soybean, chickpea, vetch, oats, rye, turnip, radish and sunflower popping up between rows of Q232.

“I am very excited about my new trial. The seed was all mixed together in a cement mixer and then planted with an old model precision planter at about 52kg/h,” says Simon.

“The idea is that a diversity of plant species will encourage a diversity of soil biology which will over time enhance soil health enabling greater water and nutrient holding capacity through increased levels of carbon in the soil,” he says.

The inter-row plants will eventually be shaded out by the cane crop and the nutrients taken up by them will return to the soil in a form available to the cane crop.

“All of the plants use different nutrients in differing amounts. Oats in particular is there because it can access phosphorus that sugarcane cannot, but when the oats die the phosphorus that is in its leaves and stems will be able to be taken up by the cane,” Simon explains.

Simon recently hosted a Soil Health Workshop for 70 farmers at his property. People travelled from as far west as Biloela and north as the Burdekin to hear agricultural ecologist, David Hardwick, and soil biologist Dr Graham Stirling. CANEGROWERS, along with Reef Catchments, was a sponsor of the day.

Discussion centred around declining yields from depleted soils in monoculture situations. The presenters encouraged farmers to follow well known good farming practices, such as trash blanketing and controlled traffic farming in sugarcane. They also talked about the importance of maintaining plant growth in blocks using a mixture of a cash crop and cover crops during fallow, and looking into diverse plantings.

Memories of a writer and farmer

By Bill Kerr

Gordonvale cane grower Harry Edwin (Clive) Morton, who has died aged 83, was one of a kind. He was passionate about writing and during a career as a journalist and author as well as a cane grower he strove to create a more favourable public perception of cane farmers and cane growing.

Clive was an elected member of CANEGROWERS for many years and his colourful, entertaining presentation of motions was a feature of many conferences. When delegates bemoaned the lack of favourable media coverage for their industry, Clive set out to do something about it. Always a firebrand, he knew how to get publicity, although his outspoken advocacy sometimes put him offside with organisational leaders.

His grassroots approach and his narrative writing style resulted in his work being published in The Bulletin magazine and in city and local newspapers. For many years he was a valuable contributor to Australian Canegrower magazine under his own name and the nom-de-plume of Pindar Pete. In his later years he was a sugar columnist for Blues Country. Even after a farm accident left him in a wheelchair, he continued to visit farms and write stories.

Clive was an authority on the adoption of mechanical harvesting and was present when Germany’s Claas Group brought its green cane harvester to the Mulgrave area for their first tests in Australia. With Melbourne University’s Geoff Burrows he produced The Canecutters which won a national award for regional history. He wrote By Strong Arms, a history of Mulgrave Mill, The Evo Owen Story about the development of the Owen Machine Gun, On Parade, about Gordonvale State Schools and Interned about Australia’s WW2 camps.

It was an honour and privilege for me to work closely with Clive while I was Editor of Australian Canegrower as he was always accurate and reliable as well as entertaining.
**Australian Canegrower** | 18 August 2014

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Zero indicates either no rain or no report was sent. These rainfall figures are subject to verification and may be updated later. Weather forecasts, radar and satellite images and other information for the farming community can be accessed on www.bom.gov.au. Weather report provided by the Bureau of Meteorology’s Commercial Weather Services Unit.

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