Laser levelling and efficient drainage working wonders in Innisfail

Eight page farm machinery feature
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Cane growers are the key to protecting Australia’s fields from exotic insects and diseases that could devastate the industry.

It is important that you are aware of the risk, and if you spot anything unusual in your field you should always check it out and call your local BSES office or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. The call is free (except from mobiles) and early detection will help protect your industry.

Visit www.planthealthaustralia.com.au for further information and a list of the top priority pests.
CEO’S COMMENT

I am delighted to put pen to paper for the first time as CANEGROWERS CEO. I come to the sugar industry with a background first and foremost as a fellow farmer. In my case, a producer of grain, cattle and cotton.

Brendan Stewart
CANEGROWERS CEO

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Australia’s 24 sugar mills are well-advanced in the processing of this year’s 30.5 million tonne sugarcane crop, according. By the time this magazine is published, nearly 70% of the available crop will have been crushed.

The weather in many areas has been ideal for harvesting, and milling performance has been good in most areas.

Sugar content has also trended upwards overall; with an industry average CCS of 13.58. Although the weather has been ideal for harvesting, many areas would now welcome some rainfall for the advantageous growth of plant and ratoon crops.

Read more from each region in our regional round up on page 6.

This edition we feature farm machinery and equipment, with a bumper special beginning on page 14.

We have also included a look at the Singh family’s farming operation in Innisfail. Brothers Harpreet (Happy) and Jassi Singh have turned a run-down property into a busy sugarcane and banana farm with the help of some drainage work. Turn to page 23 to read more.

I hope you enjoy this edition.

Jasmine Hunt

Golden tips

ASSCT calls for research paper submissions

The Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ASSCT) has called for research paper submission for its 2014 conference to be held on the Gold Coast.

The deadline for outlines of research, development and extension papers for the 2014 annual conference is 11 October 2013 and posters must be received by the Editor before 21 February 2014 to be considered.

The conference will be held at Jupiter’s Hotel and Casino, Gold Coast from Tuesday 29 April to Thursday 1 May 2014. For more information visit www.assct.com.au.

Pressure cooker: media focusses public pressure on grower title

By CANEGROWERS Communications Manager, Suzi Moore

Public pressure can achieve a lot in a short period of time. Taking issues public through the media can be risky business - it’s certainly not as smooth as sliding over floorboards in socks. Cluey journalists seek to file a balanced account of the issues of the day. They dig deep and report what they believe to be the case.

Some companies shy away from the media; scared that their brand will end up as chopped liver by the time the story goes to air.

CANEGROWERS has taken the opposite approach, keeping journalists around the country up to date with what is happening in the Australian sugarcane industry on an ongoing basis. CANEGROWERS sees the benefit of its views going through the rigours of journalists before being published or going to air. Our approach needs to be able to stand up to public scrutiny.

The release of the Green Pool report, which suggested cane growers should move now to take their stake in sugar beyond the farm gate, captured the attention of the media and the public this fortnight. CANEGROWERS public invitation for the industry to get around the table as a matter of priority to look at the watershed issue resulted in immediate action by industry.

When it comes to mentions of CANEGROWERS in the media, you might hear a snippet on your local radio or television or in your local paper, but CANEGROWERS’ coverage actually spans state, and in many cases, nation-wide.

CANEGROWERS uses a media portal to monitor coverage. The media portal tracks coverage and allocates an ‘Advertising Space Rate’ which is an amount based on what we would have had to fork out if we had to pay for the coverage. It’s not an accurate measure by any means, but it does give us a great indication of how our media presence is tracking.

The chart above shows media coverage in the week the grower title media release hit the wires (from 14 to 21 September 2013). It gives a good indication as to how powerful a voice CANEGROWERS has when it reports on industry issues through the media.
Vigilance, unity and integrity of fundamental importance

By CANEGROWERS CEO
Brendan Stewart

I am delighted to put pen to paper for the first time as CANEGROWERS CEO.

I come to the sugar industry with a background first and foremost as a fellow farmer. In my case, a producer of grain, cattle and cotton. Secondly, I bring over 20 years of experience as a producer representative, with involvement in research, development and extension; in trade and marketing policy and negotiation, and importantly with nine years direct experience in marketing Australian wheat to the world.

What this experience has taught me is that as an industry, and as an organisation, three things in particular are of fundamental importance. They are vigilance, unity and integrity.

We all must strive to be vigilant of the constant pressures on the industry and its respective participants. Pressure from government, at all three levels domestically, as well as at the international level, particularly in trade negotiation, is only one of the pressures we face.

There has been, and will continue to be, increasing pressure from the broader community – in particular the urban community – as our society evolves, and the strong family links to our regions that once existed break down. We must remember that urban communities are a strong and powerful force in shaping government policy, yet they know little about the impacts of their choices. Far from shutting them out, we need to invite them to understand our industry, and educate them to its importance, and the value it creates.

If we are united in our purpose and cause, we will be a strong and determined force for the industry. We all have heard the phrase “united we stand, divided we fall”. I have witnessed many organisations - both agri-political and commercial - lose significant ground in negotiations with government, in international trade and with the downstream sector, because of an inability to remain united.

This is within our control, and whilst we all have differences, we must understand that we can’t be all things to everyone. Providing we remain focused on what is in the best interest of the industry, our differences are not insurmountable.

Integrity is our most important brand attribute. I have always viewed CANEGROWERS as being an organisation that has built its reputation on being well researched and considered, its advice to government unquestionable. The positions the organisation has taken have always been, without doubt, squarely in the interest of its members, and always with a view to the broader industry. It is this brand reputation that prompted me to seek the CEO role.

Looking forward, there is much to do. At an industry level, the continued financial and environmental sustainability of the producer sector has to remain our number-one priority. The mere “right to farm” will become increasingly important.

The release of the Greenpool Report was a significant step in grower self determination. As the next stage of industry reform evolves post deregulation, it is critical that growers have access to, and transparency of, market information, and as much flexibility to allow them to make decisions that best position themselves for the future.

This is a natural next step in the evolution that will inevitably happen along the way. Without legislative support, growers have no option but to maintain as much strength in their own hands as possible.

At an organisational level, I am determined to ensure that CANEGROWERS is positioned as an efficient provider of grower and commercial services to its members, throughout its extended CANEGROWERS regional network.

I will be looking for more opportunities for our Queensland office to work constructively with our regional counterparts, to draw on the collective experience and expertise to take the industry, and organisation, forward.

I thank the board for giving me their confidence, and I look forward to working with each and every one of you.
Soil health key to farm productivity says new Nuffield Scholar

Simon Mattsson, from Marian in the Mackay district has been awarded a prestigious Nuffield Scholarship, supported by Sugar Research Australia (SRA).

Simon will study soil health, focussing on both the beneficial and predatory microbial activities that are crucial to sustaining productive soils.

Simon manages his family’s 155-hectare farm producing sugarcane, soybeans and chickpeas in rotation.

“I’d like to focus on soil biology and the balances of fungi and bacteria, as well as the beneficial and predatory-type microbial activities which are crucial to sustaining soil health,” he said.

“My desire is to investigate soil health and the fundamentals that sustain good practices that will provide the basis of a sustainable production system into the future.”

In addition, Simon would like to investigate value adding at the farm gate to make the most of the current rotation of soybeans and chickpeas with the primary crop of sugarcane.

During his scholarship Simon hopes to visit the UK, the USA, Brazil, India and South Africa.

“As the new research, development and extension company for the Australian sugarcane industry, we are proud to continue the tradition of funding a Nuffield scholarship placement,” said Dr Michael O’Shea, General Manager Research Funding Unit, SRA.

“Simon’s successful learnings will be applied within his own farming system and then communicated to the whole-of-industry for everyone’s benefit.”

QFF President re-elected at AGM

THE Queensland Farmers’ Federation has welcomed southwest Queensland cotton grower Joanne Grainger to her second term as president of the organisation, having served as QFF president since 2011.

Ms Grainger is joined by Kingaroy dairy farmer Brian Tessmann, who is again serving as QFF vice-president, and continuing his current well-known industry role as president of the Queensland Dairyfarmers’ Organisation (QDO).

The make-up of the QFF Board and Council also changed with CANEGROWERS board member and senior vice-chairman Allan Dingle, who farms near Bundaberg, joining the Board and Council to replace CANEGROWERS former senior vice-chairman Joe Russo. Mr Russo had been a QFF councillor since 2004.

Darling Downs cotton grower Stuart Armitage, Cecil Plains, has replaced a position on the Board left vacant by retiring long-term board member and councillor, Gary Sansom.

Mr Armitage is already familiar to the QFF membership through his existing role on the council representing Cotton Australia.

QFF CEO Dan Galligan said that QFF was in very capable hands with so many experienced leaders on the Board and the Council, and would benefit from the ongoing leadership and experience of Ms Grainger.

At the AGM, QFF thanked Gary Sansom AM for his long-standing service to the organisation by awarding him life membership to QFF, the first time that life membership has been given to any individual.

More than 60% of Queensland drought-declared

Continuing hot, dry weather has put more than 60% of Queensland into drought.

Queensland Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, John McVeigh, said Charters Towers, Central Highlands, Woorabinda, Isaac, Barcaldine and the remainder of Blackall-Tambo shires had been added to the growing list of drought-declared areas.

“This takes the number of drought-declared shires to 25, including seven part-declared,” Mr McVeigh said.

The maps of drought-declared areas and boundary descriptions can be found at www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au

CANEGROWERS to meet with new government ministry

CANEGROWERS has said it looks forward to working with the members of the new federal government ministry, named by Prime Minister Tony Abbot last fortnight.

CANEGROWERS will be work closely with the new Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce.

Mr Joyce previously represented Queensland on the Senate, prior to his pre-selection by the National Party for the seat of New England in September 2013. Mr Joyce is from a farming background and is a chartered accountant.

Richard Colbeck has been named Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, while other portfolios of importance to agriculture include Greg Hunt, who has been given the Environment portfolio; Andrew Robb (Trade and Investment); Ian Macfarlane (Industry); Bruce Billson (Small Business); and Eric Abetz (Employment).
Smartcane BMP Update

By CANEGROWERS Smartcane BMP Project Director Malcolm Petrie

What’s in a name? Since the inception of the Cane BMP program CANEGROWERS have been grappling with an identity crisis. Whilst the term BMP is widely understood in agricultural circles, the same cannot be said for those outside the industry.

CANEGROWERS needed to identify a BMP brand name that would be contemporary and marketable to those in the industry as well as the broader community.

After much deliberation and a pressing deadline CANEGROWERS decided on Smartcane BMP. Smartcane was first utilised by CANEGROWERS back in 2008 with the development of the Smartcane booklets, the term SMART is also an acronym for evaluating program performance objectives: Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant and Time framed.

CANEGROWERS met with the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to discuss extension alignment between the Smartcane BMP facilitator network and the QDAFF extension service in support of the Smartcane BMP facilitators’ engagement and training program for growers. CANEGROWERS is also seeking a similar level of alignment and support from the Regional NRM bodies under the Reef Rescue program.

Employment contracts have now been finalised for the Smartcane BMP facilitators in Innisfail, Proserpine, Maryborough, Isis, Mossman, Cairns, Mackay, Tablelands and Burdekin districts. Negotiation with Bundaberg, Tully and Herbert River districts are soon to be completed. A four-day Smartcane training program for the facilitators will be convened in Mackay in the first week of November prior to the program launch schedule for 12 November in Brisbane to coincide with the CANEGROWERS board meeting.

CANEGROWERS received a report from the Independent Science Panel (sponsored by the Queensland Government Department of Premier and Cabinet) that evaluated the Smartcane BMP modules in delivering water quality benefits and meeting Reef Plan targets.

For more information contact Malcolm Petrie on 07 3864 6444 or malcolm_petrie@canegrowers.com.au

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MOSSMAN
At the end of week 13, Mossman Mill had crushed 361,094 tonnes of cane for a mill average of 12.44 CCS. With 62% cut, the area is still cutting above the estimate of 575,000 tonnes. The mill average CCS is still improving slowly. ■

TABLELAND
At the end of week 15, the Tableland Mill had crushed 427,162 tonnes. The mill area is averaging 115 tc/ha and the CCS has increased to 13.97. ■

CAIRNS REGION
Despite some early delays due to wet weather, at the time of writing, growers in both Babinda and Mulgrave zones were taking advantage of favourable conditions. Both zones are currently cutting above initial crop estimates with Babinda at 108% and Mulgrave 103%. Crop yield in the Mulgrave zone is currently 91.8 tonnes/hectare and the CCS has been revised down to 12.7. ■

INNISFAIL
The harvest has reached the halfway point. Despite further showers interrupting harvesting in the latter half of August, fine weather has prevailed since and harvesting is continuing at a frantic pace. The mill performance has been outstanding despite suffering problems with the main boiler and crushing which continued at a reduced rate for three days in the first week of September. The season to date crushing rate is 510 tonnes per hour. Planting is also continuing at a frantic pace with a major effort to get an extra 800 hectares in this year. There is some concern with the expected late finish to crushing. Growers are starting to assess which blocks to cut in the last round. CCS is still struggling to stay over 13. The crop continues to maintain better than pre-season estimate and is cutting out at 5% above pre-season estimate. ■

TULLY
Crushing of a larger than average crop, which is now estimated at 2.35 million tonnes, has reached the 50% mark. The 90 mm of rain earlier in September disrupted the harvest in parts of the mill area, however was beneficial for next year’s plant and early ratoon cane. Favourable planting conditions this season indicates that the area under cane for next year will increase, and while most growers have finished planting there are a number of planting contractors still working. CCS is climbing slowly, however indications are that the final CCS will be below average. The crush should be completed by the end of the first week in December, provided everything goes well. ■

PROSERPINE
Forthnightly throughput at Proserpine Mill was reduced due to an extended maintenance stop. Still, some 175,240 tonnes of cane was processed, bringing the total for the season to date to 987,397 tonnes. CCS continues to climb with seasonal average now sitting at 14.12. Dry weather has persisted, which is assisting harvesting operations. With the crush 60% completed, it is expected the harvesting will be completed in the first week of November. ■

MACKAY
The Mackay Sugar mills, for the week ending 15 September, crushed a total of 240,462 tonnes of cane. There were maintenance stops at all three mills, which depressed throughput. Bin weights increased across the operations as well as most of the cane quality parameters. If it remains dry, the likely effect will be a continued increase in bagasse and sugar content, with potential decrease in total tonnes to harvest. The total cane crushed to date this season is 2,910,001 tonnes. A total of 67,189 tonnes of cane was crushed at Plane Creek for the week ending 14 September. The highest CCS sample for the week was from a rake of plant Q183 at 17.71 from the Carmila West Productivity District. ■

BUNDABERG
Bundaberg Sugar’s mills have passed the one million tonnes mark for the 2013 season. The season-to-date total is 1,011,003 tonnes and Bundaberg has crushed just over 65% of the crop estimate. The average CCS for week 12 increased to 15.75 units with 96% of the cane crushed by the Bundaberg mills averaging 15.00 CCS or above. The weekly average CCS at Millaquin was 15.75 units and at Bingera 15.76 units, an increase of 0.14 units. The season-to-date average sugar content for the region is 14.48 units. Current dry weather conditions are forcing growers to irrigate both plant and ratoon crops. In many cases they are also irrigating cane that is yet to be harvested in order to maintain weight and assist with rationing. ■

ISIS
Dry, dry, dry sums up the 2013 crushing season. Sixty-eight percent of the current estimate (1.2 M tonne) has been harvested, for an average CCS of 13.75. Unfortunately, the actual crop for harvest this year is unlikely to achieve the estimate. Growers have commenced irrigating plant and ratoon cane and some have even resorted to irrigating standing cane yet to be harvested. Fertilising has commenced and growers are asked to consider Ravensdown when ordering fertiliser. CANEGROWERS Isis has recently lodged two submissions on electricity pricing. Isis Mill has agreed to increase the Base (payment) CCS from 13 to 13.25 units from 27 September. Australian Prime Fibre is looking for more trash product so growers are asked to contact the baling contractor. The final payment on the 2012 season sugarcane trash sales has now been received by growers. ■

MARYBOROUGH
As at 18 September, MSF has crushed 311,088 tonnes of cane at CCS of 13.93. During week seven, the mill crushed 42,357 tonnes of cane at CCS of 14.76. The highest CCS for the week was 17.40 from a block of Q208 R2 from the Granville district. The dry weather continues, with Maryborough only recording 4.4 mm of rain since the beginning of the crush. ■

ROCKY POINT
As of the end of week four, Rocky Point had crushed 46,309 tonnes at a seasonal average CCS of 14.12 reaching 18% of estimate. Planting is well under way with dry conditions prevailing, making for excellent harvest and planting operations. However, due to lack of irrigation, most growers will soon be forced to tanker water their plants if some rain does not occur soon. While Yellow Canopy Syndrome has not been identified in Rocky Point, some RSD is appearing across the district. The area has placed an increased emphasis on clean seed sources as a result. ■
Red Witchweed update

Surveillance has continued in the search for red witchweed – the serious pest weed discovered on four Mackay sugarcane properties.

Thus far, biosecurity staff have conducted surveillance on 115 properties (covering a total of at least 8792 ha).

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry said the Red Witchweed Response has directed significant resources to surveillance activities to identify the distribution of the pest in Queensland as rapidly as possible. However, as much of the lifecycle of red witchweed is underground and the plant is only visible above ground for a short period of time, follow-up surveillance will be required throughout the summer months.

Biosecurity Queensland is continuing to work closely with affected property owners and the sugar industry to facilitate harvesting and planting, in line with strict risk management protocols to prevent the spread of red witchweed.

A red witchweed identification YouTube video has been produced to help educate and increase public awareness of the pest plant: www.youtube.com/watch?v=r61JOI6givs

Producers are urged to remember that red witchweed is a notifiable pest and that under Queensland’s plant health legislation you are obligated to report any sightings of the pest to Biosecurity Queensland within 24 hours of becoming aware of its presence.

For more information contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit www.daff.qld.gov.au.

HCPSL now offering ARL lab services to clients

Herbert Cane Productivity Services Limited (HCPSL) has launched a new service which will provide Ravensdown ARL laboratory services to Herbert River cane farming clients.

“Herbert growers using Ravensdown products have been requesting that their soil tests be sent to the Ravensdown ARL Lab Services group for some time now,” HCPSL Manager Lawrence Di Bella said.

“HCPSL can now offer this service. Growers will now have the option to nominate which lab they wish to forward their soil, water and leaf samples when they drop them off to the HCPSL office.”

HCPSL staff will continue to provide an impartial soil, leaf and water test interpretation for all Herbert cane farmers that utilise the HCPSL services.

Ravensdown’s Regional Manager, Bruce Keenan stated that the partnership between ARL and HCPSL is a great opportunity for their customers operating in the Herbert.

“Synergies between HCPSL and Ravensdown recognise growers’ requirements and the benefits of providing a choice of labs for the accurate interpretation of soil, leaf and water testing, so it’s pleasing to now be able to offer growers the option to drop tests at HCPSL’s office, which can add additional local knowledge for growers’ benefit, or as previously, to the CANEGROWERS Herbert River office.”

Lawrence Di Bella.

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CANEGROWERS crop insurance exclusive to members

By CANEGROWERS Manager – IR and Grower Services, Greg Trost

A recent enquiry from a CANEGROWERS non-member has highlighted the value of CANEGROWERS crop insurance scheme for members.

The CANEGROWERS cane crop insurance scheme automatically covers CANEGROWERS members. As part of the development of the voluntary organisation, CANEGROWERS Queensland, in consultation with local CANEGROWERS companies, decided to establish the CANEGROWERS fire crop insurance scheme as an exclusive benefit to protect all members’ sugarcane through an annual group policy. This exclusive arrangement and service to members has been highly valued by members for more than a decade and is an integral part of CANEGROWERS’ voluntary membership arrangements. All members’ sugarcane is insured all year-round, be it standover cane, new plant cane or ratoon cane.

Since 1990, the CANEGROWERS cane crop insurance scheme has been underwritten by CGU Insurance. A summary of the policy cover for CANEGROWERS members follows.

Peril insured:

The policy provides cover for financial loss due to the total loss of standing cane or the additional cost of harvesting as a result of fire damage to standing cane (other than controlled burn-offs).

Period of insurance:

It is an annual policy renewed from 1 June each year.

Indemnity per tonne of cane:

The scheme offers an indemnity for a selected value per tonne of cane up to a maximum of $40 per tonne. Your local CANEGROWERS office can advise on the level of the indemnity selected for the mill area. The insurer’s liability per tonne of cane is for the value per tonne of cane selected, subject always to the indemnity being limited to 90% of the value per tonne of cane at the sugar mill, whichever is the lesser for the grower concerned.

Immature cane:

In the event of a loss of sugarcane by an insured peril before the cane has reached maturity, the indemnity is determined upon the basis that the cane had reached maturity.

Green cane:

For those growers who customarily harvest and deliver green cane to the mill, CGU’s policy is extended to cover the difference in payment to the grower whose cane is damaged by an insured peril and delivered to the mill as burnt cane.

Additional features:

(1) Additional costs
CGU will pay for additional costs including fire brigade charges necessarily and reasonably incurred for the sole purpose of avoiding or diminishing a loss following an insured peril.

(2) Transit
Grower’s harvested sugarcane is insured during land transit between the cane production area and the sugar mill to which it is to be delivered; subject to the loss arising from fire, flood, collision and/or overturning of the vehicle carrying the harvested cane.

(3) Hail damage
Loss or damage to standing cane by the impact of hailstones is covered subject to a maximum sum insured of $2,000 on any one Cane Production Area (CPA).

Claim notification:

On the happening of any event likely to result in a claim, the grower shall notify the nearest local CANEGROWERS office as soon as possible, and within 14 days, complete a claim form providing details of the event, nature and the extent of damage to the cane. The local CANEGROWERS office will appoint a loss assessor to assist with the investigation and reporting on the claim. Growers are to use due diligence in doing all things reasonably practicable to minimise interruption of the business and to avoid or diminish the loss following an insured peril.

Top-up cover available

Top-up cover is available for individual growers to increase the sum insured value, subject to general conditions, to safeguard all parties in the event of over insurance. Growers should contact the local CANEGROWERS office for details of the renewal cover arranged from 1 June 2013. Should an individual grower require ‘top-up’ cover, then the local CANEGROWERS office will be able assist with the application form for such fire cover for the period to 1 June 2014.

CANEGROWERS cane crop insurance scheme, which is exclusive to CANEGROWERS members, covers members’ cane crop for the 12 month policy period through CGU Insurance without any special arrangements having to be made by the member. This is very cost-effective insurance cover, and no grower can realistically afford to be without this protection.

The benefit to members of this insurance is that it enables members to be protected against crop losses. Without crop insurance protection, events, which may be completely beyond the grower’s control, would impact on the grower financially and may potentially have catastrophic consequences. There have been instances when the continuing viability of a farmer would have been at risk if it were not for the CANEGROWERS fire crop insurance scheme.
Sugar Australia Nutrition News

Government dietary advice on sugars

By Dr Mary Harrington, Nutrition Communications Manager, Sugar Australia

You may (or may not!) have noticed last February, amid a flurry of media activity, new Australian Dietary Guidelines were publicly launched by the Department of Health and Ageing. Among the list of new recommendations, the advice on sugar is to ‘Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks’.

No surprises here, some might say. However if you delve a little deeper, the previous advice on sugars (1995) focussed on ‘moderate’ intakes, whereas now it says to ‘limit’.

This is only small change in the terms used, but in scientific standings it represents quite a big shift in thinking. ‘Limit’ is a strong word and can be perceived as implying exclude, control, and regulate.

You would assume there have been some major scientific developments over the years to justify this change to ‘limit’, however, this is not the case.

The National Health and Medical Research Council, the Government body that developed this health advice, found no strong link between sugar itself and body weight, although there was a link in selected studies that were assessed, with sugar sweetened beverages.

Therefore it seems that the science used to support the guideline was in reference to a limited number of studies, and these were in relation to sugar containing drinks and not foods.

While the review of the Australian dietary guidelines was much needed, having a rigorous scientific process should be paramount. This can ensure that the advice provided by the government is evidence-based and does not mislead.

As for other elements of the dietary advice, Guideline 1 is seen to be the most important ‘To achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious foods and drinks to meet your energy needs’.

For further information see www.eatforhealth.gov.au.

AustSafe Manager wins at the QRRRWN Awards

A regional manager for superannuation fund AustSafe Super has been recognised for her community spirit and passion for providing service to clients as the recipient of the Queensland Rural, Regional & Remote Women’s Network Strong Women Leadership Award (QRRRWN).

Stacey Watson, AustSafe Super’s Regional Manager for Central Queensland, claimed the award for the ‘Professional’ category. Congratulations Stacey.

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Sugar prices have been relatively stable recently, reflecting the interplay of sugar fundamentals versus broader financial market themes. The positive themes in sugar markets continue to gather momentum; albeit slowly. A growing number of sugar analysts suggest we are heading toward a tighter balance in world sugar supplies.

Why are sugar fundamentals suggesting a transition to a more balanced market? The answer lays in both supply and demand variables. With flat prices falling almost 60% during the past three seasons, and a futures curve normalising to compensate for the carrying of sugar forward, production is reduced and supply finds its way into storage. One particularly interesting variable during the price downtrend has been the signals given by the refined market. Refining margins have been consistently stronger than one would expect in a surplus market, leading to a firmer prompt raw market. Such signals go some way to explaining the phenomenon of the ‘surplus that never really arrived’. As the refined market is less controlled, it is more elastic to world price movements and less likely to be stored. The refined market has shown we have continually underestimated demand. With a huge population in Asia consuming more sugar ever year, this has made the demand variable and more difficult to predict.

Another interesting observation has been the market’s reaction to movements in speculative positioning in sugar futures. We believe the speculative market, now turning a net short position to a net long, is indicative of another large market segment acknowledging the broader transition to more balanced conditions in global sugar markets.

Elsewhere, the US monetary authorities are creating increasing volatility in all asset markets as they have become less certain of when they will end their supportive bond buying program, in place since the GFC. This uncertainty is causing large movements in all markets as money flows into, and out of, US$ assets. The direct implication for sugar markets is the extreme volatility this is causing in leading sugar related currencies of Brazil, India and Thailand. Broad US$ strength lowers effective cost of production for these producers which may influence planting decisions, and also makes spot and forward hedging more attractive. A sustained period of US$ strength is a positive for all sugar exporters in local currency terms, yet will always provide a negative headwind for world sugar prices.

Currency
The Australian currency has regained composure in recent weeks, shaking off the very negative sentiment that saw it fall sharply from above parity to the US$ this year. After consolidating at the US90 cent level, a combination of factors has seen it rally to the US95 cent level, attracting the attention of the RBA.

The main driver at present is the broader US$ sentiment, buffeted by the inconsistent US economic data.
Annual report shows value derived for QSL members

By Chief Financial Officer, Robert Hines

QSL is proud to deliver its 2012/13 Annual Report, which is now available at www.qsl.com.au. The report shows the value derived by QSL for members throughout the last financial year. A key highlight of this year’s report is a performance snapshot of each of our value offerings (financing, pricing, marketing and logistics) including a historical five-year overview. If you would like a hard copy version, please email meryl.inch@qsl.com.au.

In this article, we have incorporated some of the key highlights from the report and recent updates on our activities in each of our value offerings.

Financing: Providing low-cost financing through advance payments

QSL has a well established financing structure that allows us to continue to provide advance payments to millers, which they pass onto growers throughout the year.

The Advances Program is a proportional system, which means that while the percentage increment of each payment is the same for all pools, the actual advance rate paid (per metric tonne IPS) differs between millers, depending on QSL’s forecast of the estimated net pool price of each pool at the time the payment is made, and the tonnage allocated to individual pools by each miller.

In September, the QSL Board met and reviewed the indicative advance rates for October and November and confirmed they will remain at 65% and 67.5% respectively.

2012/13 highlight: Weighted average cost of funds was at its lowest in five years at 3.48%. This low cost of funding is passed onto members through the Shared Pool to finance the Advances Program.

Pricing: Providing knowledge, expertise and experience in pricing and managing futures

QSL’s pool performances have been updated as per the table right. This information aims to give growers a sense of how the QSL-managed pools are performing over the current season. The prices given are in Gross $A dollars/IPS tonnes and don’t include a firm Shared Pool allocation.

2012/13 highlight: QSL outperformed the market benchmark by an average of $2.20 per tonne IPS in QSL-managed ICE 11 pools. By actively managing chartering activities, obtaining net premiums greater than the benchmark and the Finance Rebate provided by corporate activities, QSL obtained a net positive allocation of $1.03 per tonne IPS to the Shared Pool.

Marketing: Maintaining strong relationships with high-returning customers in the Asia Pacific Region

QSL has a team of professionals working to obtain the best returns for members, which are paid in addition to the ICE 11 sugar price. Our marketing team are also always looking to capture the best returns for the US Quota market. For most of the 2012/13 season the team has seen little value in selling into the US ICE 16 market, as there was more money to be made selling into Asia. However, recently the Far East Premium weakened slightly and our team exercised the option to capture some higher values within the US market. While we seized this opportunity, the market has since shifted, which has seen our team continue to focus on the Asian market.

The United States recently released its tariff-rate quotas (TRQ) for imported raw sugar for the 2014 Fiscal Year (1 October 2013 – 30 September 2014). Australia’s TRQ is around 87,000 tonnes. TRQs allow countries to export specified quantities of a product to the United States at a relatively low tariff. Imports above the quota’s quantitative threshold face a much higher tariff making such sales less attractive.

2012/13 highlight: QSL outperformed the marketing premium benchmark by $5.02 per tonne IPS.

Logistics: Operating safe and efficient storage, handling and shipping of raw sugar

QSL continues to actively manage storage peaks and prepare for the receipt of the Harvest Pool buffer tonnage (590,000 tonnes), which is due to start in October. To-date, we have received around 1.8 million tonnes of the current RSSA supply estimate of 2.8 million tonnes. We are working closely with millers who market their own sugar to ensure they meet their shipping timelines to assist in managing peak storage.

In good news, the first stage of dredging at the Bundaberg Port has been completed, which allows access for larger ships to export directly from the Bundaberg Sugar Terminal. The next round of dredging is due to be completed by the end of the year. We have also completed the re-roofing of Shed 3 at the Mackay Bulk Sugar Terminal. This was delivered within budget and on-time.

Current as of 30 August 2013 | 2013 Gross
---
| QSL Harvest Pool | $392 |
| QSL Discretionary Pool | $394 |
| QSL Actively Managed Pool | $404 |
| QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool | $392 |
| QSL US Quota Pool | $489 |
| QSL 2013 Season Forward Pool | $429 |
| QSL 2014 Season Forward Pool | $411 |
A new industry working group has been appointed by the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance to review how the characteristics of potential sugarcane varieties are prioritised during the selection process.

Neil Fisher, Chief Executive Officer, Sugar Research Australia

The SRA Board supported a number of recommendations made by the team, namely that:

- We continue to operate our NIR unit as there is no commercial operator that can currently provide this service.
- NIR technology in our industry is still in the development stage and is not yet ready to be commercialised.
- Our NIR unit develops a business case which includes options for commercialising this service in the future.

The SRA Board strongly believes that our NIR capability will be an integral component of successful research and development programs into the future.
Straying livestock: your options

By Chris Cooper, CJ Cooper & Associates, Solicitors

Cattle and other livestock damaging cane crops is an issue for growers in many regions. The following is a general outline of the legal position and some options to consider.

Livestock owners’ responsibility for straying animals

The general proposition is that stock owners have a duty to keep their livestock from trespassing on someone else’s property. Stock owners are generally liable for any damage, such as damage to crops, their stock cause by such trespassing.

Property owners’ rights

Property owners have a right to enjoy their land without livestock trespassing on to it. They do not have an obligation to prevent someone else’s livestock from straying onto their lands. That is an obligation on livestock owners. If the property owners suffer loss or damage as a result of livestock trespassing on the property owners’ land, then generally the property owners are entitled to recover compensation/damages from the livestock owners.

The following are some options for growers whose lands are subjected to livestock straying onto their lands:

1. Discussion

Try to resolve the issue of livestock trespass through discussion and negotiation directly with the livestock owners.

2. Mediation

If direct discussions are not possible or fail, consider using the Disputes Resolution Centres administered through the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General. This dispute resolution system is free and is designed to resolve disputes between neighbours without going to court. The system assists neighbours and others involved in a dispute or conflict to try to resolve the problem through a free mediation involving the relevant parties with an independent mediator. The mediator is appointed locally through the Disputes Centre and conducts a meeting between the parties. The mediator’s role is to bring the parties to the dispute together with the mediator, and try to work out, by discussion, some way of resolving the problem that the parties agree to and can live with. Dispute centres are located in Brisbane, Hervey Bay, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns.

3. Letter of demand

Growers could consider sending a formal letter of demand, either from the grower or local CANEGROWERS office or a lawyer, to the livestock owners. The letter could give notice of trespass and demand preventative action be taken, in default of which other steps will be considered. Such a letter might apply sufficient pressure to have the livestock owners take the necessary steps to prevent further trespass.

4. Local council

Most Local Councils have powers through their local by-laws to operate a pound, and to capture and detain straying livestock. Lodging a complaint with Council may assist.

5. Impounding

In some cases, growers themselves can capture and hold the livestock and claim against the livestock owner the costs and expenses of doing so, and any damage caused.

6. Police/stock squad/RSPCA

A complaint could be made to the local police and also the stock squad officer, through the local police station. Also, under the Animal Care and Protection Act, the RSPCA and relevant department officers have the right to take action, including the seizing of animals, if the animals are in danger or risk of harm. If the cattle are straying on public lands this may be an option.

7. Legal action

The growers could take legal action in court against the livestock owners. Such action could be in the form of a claim for damages suffered. A claim could also be made for an injunction (binding court order) to require the livestock owner under court order to take all necessary steps to prevent livestock continuing to trespass. Any such court action would have to be carefully considered as it can be expensive, stressful and time consuming. Good evidence of the trespass, and clear evidence of the identity and ownership of the livestock, would have to be established as part of proving the case.

8. Self-help

Self-help measures, such as erecting a suitable barrier or a fence to prevent the livestock coming on, might be considered. Whilst the growers are not at fault, and have no legal obligation or duty to keep the livestock out of the growers’ property, in some cases, self-help may practically and commercially be an option to consider. The grower might fix the problem themselves, notwithstanding that it is really the livestock owner’s responsibility.

9. Dividing fence

Under the Neighbourhood Disputes (Dividing Fences and Trees) Act, a dispute about the construction, maintenance, and contribution to costs of, a suitable dividing fence, if unable to be resolved by the neighbours, can be resolved by order of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. As a general rule, cane growers are not required to contribute to the cost of erecting or maintaining a suitable dividing fence. This is because various courts and tribunals have consistently found that growers derive no benefit from a dividing fence, and in many cases, such a dividing fence acts as a detriment to cane growing activities.

It may be possible, subject to the particular facts and circumstances under the Act for growers to make application in the tribunal for an order that a proper stock-proof fence be constructed and the cost be the sole responsibility of the neighbour, not the grower.

10. Protection

Property owners have the legal right to use such force as is reasonably necessary to defend themselves and their property. The shooting of straying livestock is likely though to be regarded as using excessive force and may well be unlawful.

If further information or advice is required, please consult your local CANEGROWERS office or contact CJ Cooper and Associates Solicitors on the CANEGROWERS freecall number 1800 177 159.
The latest in farm machinery and equipment

The 2013 Australian sugarcane harvest is up to 70% complete in most regions, with favourable weather allowing the harvest to continue in earnest. Hopefully your machinery is withstanding the test of the busy harvest season, but if you’ve noticed a few bits and pieces that need updating, now’s your chance. This Australian Canegrower feature gives you an idea of what is new in the farm machinery and equipment world – including new products from GPS Ag, family-owned Rossal Pty Ltd, Howard, Irvin Farms, Gessner, Main Engineering, Rodney Industries and Serafin. Honeycombes have also reminded growers about their used machinery range – offering quality at a good price. The category ‘farm machinery and equipment’ doesn’t just include the machines sitting in your shed. Becoming ever more useful for the farmers’ toolbox is the internet, in addition to iPhone, iPad and Android applications. We’ve provided a run-down on some apps you might find useful on your farm. Read more on page 22.

Jasmine Hunt

The harvesting treadmill

By John Irvin, Principal of Irvin Farm

The Australian sugarcane growing industry sinks or swims by its investment in machinery and its associated technology.

This investment needs to have its basis rooted firmly in its ability to adopt precision agricultural practices.

This investment by the farmer, their supply line and associated contractors will have the ability to tap profits not achievable by traditional farming methods.

Future machinery has to be able to utilise technologies such as GPS technology, adopt controlled traffic technology, yield monitoring and implement waste reduction technologies such as zonal tillage, variable rate fertilising and chemical application.

These technologies will enable farmers to manage and identify different and difficult zones of poorer or high performance within paddocks and treat them accordingly.

This bundle of future needs has to have a capability and capacity platform that is more than just ‘sales talk’ when considering future purchases.

In many cases, no one supplier can supply the total package and you have to rely on retrofitted technology.

It is important to fully understand what the limits of each piece of equipment or technology are and how the bundle goes together.

The old adage of ‘buyer beware’ is more applicable today than ever.

The reality today is that these advanced concepts of precision technologies and their platforms may sound simple and very appealing.

However, they are in fact highly complex relationships in technology, human effectiveness, management, partnerships and financial undertakings with poor performance of one or more components having the potential to compromise your farming enterprise.

No one element of technology will bring success; it will be an evolving system of farming that integrates the past into the future.

Irvin Multi-Purpose Boom

Adjustable hood (AJ jets)

Adjustable hose spacing

Spray bar (fan jets)

Double Swivel (flood jets)

7.5m to 12m flat boom (AJ jets)

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New owners at Gessner Industries - positive news for farmers

Supplied by Gessner Industries

Toowoomba-based agricultural equipment manufacturer, Gessner Industries are planning to significantly reduce the retail price of broadacre, row crop and sugarcane equipment for the upcoming 2014 season.

Gessner Industries has been manufacturing agricultural implements for almost four decades and has recently been acquired by a local Queensland company, who formally owned MPH Sherwell Grain Silos. New owners, Michael and Jim O’Connor purchased the business from Lindsay and Noel Gessner in July this year.

“For the past sixteen years I have been associated with agricultural equipment and we have seen Gessner Industries grow into a company that manufactures some of the best quality farming equipment in Australia,” said sales director, Michael O’Connor.

“In more recent times, several well respected agricultural implement manufacturers have left the industry. “To their credit, Lindsay and Noel Gessner stepped away from the day-to-day running of the business in recent years and engaged a very capable management team. The Gessner team, headed by General Manager, Tom Davis, understands the importance of remaining relevant in a tough industry, where farming practices are continually evolving,” he said.

Gessner Industries has three main manufacturing divisions, agriculture, lewis rippers and industrial/mining equipment. The new owners have put a significant focus in recent weeks on capturing a greater share of their traditional market in agricultural equipment.

“It’s not good enough having the best agricultural implements with the highest price tag,” said Mr O’Connor.

“We want to be selling more products to the farming community at large. “We understand the current price of our equipment is prohibitive to some farmers, but not anymore. Excellent quality equipment at competitive prices is our focus.”

Ray Finnie, agricultural sales manager at Gessner Industries has helped develop improvements to the single and double row billet planters in recent months. To discuss your cane equipment requirements please contact Ray at Gessner Industries on 07 4615 0100.

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Precision farming – it’s what we do

Supplied by GPS-Ag

GPS-Ag are Australian leaders in GPS precision farming technology, with a range of AutoFarm GPS steering products to suit any tractor, any budget, any farm, anytime.

Some of their most popular products in use on Australian cane farms include:

- ParaDyme and GeoSteer AutoSteer systems give the operator precise control of field applications, from tillage to planting, crop spraying to harvesting. With the ability to AutoSteer Case 8800 Track Cane Harvesters, your local GPS Ag Dealer has the most affordable AutoSteering system on the market.

- The INTEGRA - HD and VERSA full touch screens will work with any colour equipment. GPS Ag is pleased to announce the arrival of the next addition to their stable of quality screens, the COMPASS.

- The COMPASS comes as a low price entry level screen for the discerning buyer. Purely designed for guidance and steering, the simple interface uses minimal button presses on its full touch screen. Providing mapping and implement coverage, the COMPASS can be used with OnTrac2+, ParaDyme and GeoSteer.

- The INTEGRA display is the most full featured display package on the market. The INTEGRA allows growers to monitor, map, record and control their operational field activities from the one, easy to use display. With a 30.7 cm (12.1”) touchscreen, operators can choose between sub-metre, 10 cm, or RTK accuracy.

- The VERSA touchscreen with its 21.3 cm (8.4”) display is built on INTEGRA’s industry leading technology, making it the most versatile touchscreen in the field.

GPS Ag is also proud to introduce their latest steering product, SimpleSteer. SimpleSteer allows operators to control steering via a Wi-Fi enabled smart tablet. SimpleSteer is available for all GeoSteer supported vehicles. OnTrac2+, hydraulic, steer ready and CAN vehicles can all be steered with SimpleSteer.

For more information visit www.gps-ag.com.au

Straight lines, everytime.

GeoSteer and ParaDyme gives you total and precise steering control of any field application from tillage to planting, crop spraying and harvesting.

GPS Ag are Australian leaders in GPS precision farming technology, with a range of AutoFarm GPS steering products to suit any tractor, any budget, any farm every time.

Backed by professional GPS Ag service with expert technical support and advice you can depend on. Greater efficiency, greater results and less work, it’s got to be a good thing.
Out with the old, in with the used

Supplied by Honeycombes

A trusted north Queensland name that has just clocked over its one hundredth year in operation, Honeycombes Sales and Service Pty Ltd is proud to stand behind their vast range of used machinery products.

Supplying everything from used lawn tractors through to cane harvesters, the team at Honeycombes can supply the right machine to suit any farm application.

Dealer Principal Peter Carcary and Ag Machinery Sales Manager David Fola have a combined 70 years of experience, sourcing and selling agricultural machinery across Australia.

“Honeycombes prides itself in providing an excellent standard of pre-delivery inspection and safety checks on all our used equipment, to ensure they’re supplied to the buyer in the best possible condition,” said Mr Carcary.

He said Honeycombes is known for delivering premium quality, used machines with low hours all over Australia, and this month they’re planning on clearing out all used stock with an exclusive offer of free delivery within Queensland.

Mr Carcary said this is the first time Honeycombes has offered such a deal, which provides a great opportunity for farmers from rural and remote areas to take advantage of the quality used equipment available from Honeycombes.

“We realise that it’s often the freight costs which restricts people from purchasing used machinery from suppliers outside of their district. This offer gives them the opportunity to buy low-hour, quality equipment from a reputable supplier,” he said.

Honeycombes is the major distributor of John Deere in far north Queensland, and are also dealers for JCB construction equipment, Howard and Kuhn farming implements and Holden and Mazda vehicles.

For more information, visit www.honeycombes.com.au

The Honeycombes ag machinery sales team: Steven Caltabiano, Graeme Ferguson and Ag Sales Manager David Fola.
Custom-built equipment and more from north Queensland family-owned company

Supplied by Rossal

Family-owned companies such as Rossal have begun a revolution in the agricultural industry, turning passion, dedication and knowledge into an industry which strives for success.

Ross Frumento grew up in the small town of El Arish. He was taught all the aspects of farming by his father Francesco Frumento, who passed on all he knew about the trials and tribulations of sugarcane farming and harvesting.

This stuck with Ross, and at the age of 15 Ross began his trade as a boiler maker, not yet realising his small designs and projects would eventually turn into a rewarding business which now manufactures long lasting, custom-built farming equipment.

Initially, Ross began building his own farming equipment, such as his 14 metre wide spray tank and banana bagging machines. Following the success of his equipment in the field, he started to take orders for custom-built agricultural equipment for many of the local farmers.

Today, billet planters and stool splitters are just some of the equipment highly demanded by farmers from all areas of far north Queensland, as well as custom-built ally ute trays, which are made to suit any requirements for personal needs.

This year, under the name RB Engineering, the business has also erected a handful of steel sheds, perfect for on-farm storage and equipment maintenance.

While applying his knowledge to fabricate the equipment necessary for the modern farmer, Ross soon realised engineering and sugarcane harvesting went hand in hand. At the age of 21, Ross purchased his first harvester and founded Frumento Harvesting.

As a successful contract cane harvester operator, the family-owned business was booming, and before long Frumento Harvesting was dealing with a large extent of the local sugarcane harvesting.

Ten years ago the business became Rossal Pty Ltd, with Ross’ brother Sam joining the company as a Director and bringing his knowledge of farming and mechanical skills into the company.

Rossal now incorporates farming, harvesting, engineering and float hire, and Ross and his team dedicate a lot of his time to building and improving their services to the community.

For more information, contact Ross on 0408 988 601.

Custom-built equipment and more from north Queensland family-owned company

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RB Engineering 2000 Ltr Spray Tank
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- Manual pressure control
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- **$ 8,795 plus GST**
- **$ 9,676 (incl GST)**
- **MODEL EXPO1000 BP125-EP**

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**IMPORTANT:** Prices valid for existing stock only. All SPRAYRITE prices include delivery except WA, NT and TAS where Freight is to Capital City.
Faster, more efficient planting with new 2-row billet planter

Supplied by Main Engineering

Main Engineering, located just off the Bruce Highway in Proserpine, has been servicing the local area for 15 years. During the past five years, the company has rapidly expanded, with a new 1000 m² workshop, overhead cranes, new CNC machinery, welding and profile cutting capabilities.

“We found a demand for quality billet planters in north Queensland and started manufacturing these machines just over 12 months ago,” said owner, Michael Cutuli.

“We focused on fixing all the little problems that the others seem to ignore, and we feel we have come up with a great machine.”

One of Main Engineering’s satisfied customers is Craig Emmerson. Craig has been a contractor in Proserpine for the past 13 years, planting up to 3000 acres a year. So when the time came to upgrade his old planter, the decision to go with a local company heavily involved in the sugar industry was an easy one.

He says he can now plant up to 20% faster, which is the edge he was looking for in a new investment.

The new billet planter features disc opener shutes which are adjustable from 350-450 mm (250-350 upon request) and are capable of planting into a mound or flat ground. In addition, quick-hitch, ready-hitches means the operator can easily disconnect their tractor and use it for other work if required.

The row width is adjusted from 1.5 m to 2 m with ease, thanks to a hydraulic ram hidden away behind the main frame.

Liquid fertiliser, insecticide and dip-tank liquid is all carried on the machine, so there is no need to have tanks and plumbing all over the tractor. In addition, every tank is filled from one convenient manifold which means no climbing up to fill tanks - much easier and safer.

The machine’s conveyor is driven hydraulically, which most farmers are controlling through a GPS system, although it can be easily controlled with a simple rev-counter manually. Either way, rates can varied at the touch of a button.

“We have added a few optional extras for contractors and the more discerning farmer, including overhead spray bars (so the billets are dipped and also sprayed, guaranteeing no dry cane is planted); wheel spacers (row width); SS fertiliser boxes and even 50 mm plate ripper tyens which can be easily bolted in place of the disc openers if preferred,” said Michael Cutuli.

Main Engineering currently has a few machines in stock and is now taking orders for the 2014 season.

For more information visit www.mainengineering.com.au
Main Engineering
1 Row & 2 Row Billet Planters In Stock

Features Include:
- Hydraulic row width adjustment
- Hydraulic conveyor drive
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- Disc opener shutes - adjustable from 350-450mm
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Optional Extras Include:
- Overhead spray bar
- Wheel spacers (row width)
- Ground drive
- SS fertilizer bins
- Dual Row

www.mainengineering.com.au
16 Horsford Place, Proserpine
Useful apps for Australian ag

By Jasmine Hunt

Information sourced from the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Iphones, iPads and smartphones are becoming increasingly prevalent tools for farmers involved in all sorts of agricultural production. Applications (or ‘apps’) can help provide growers with extremely up-to-date information, help to work through problems, and provide a means of recording farm statistics and data.

This edition, we have provided a list of just a few that are worth investigating. Many of these are free, and are great ways to find out weather, water, disease or chemical information.

1. **Water Storage**
   Bureau of Meteorology, Free

Reports dam storage information for 250 publically owned storages across Australia.

2. **My Environment**
   Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities, Free

Uses GPS to show heritage places, wetlands, protected species, protected areas, weeds and invasive species around your location.

3. **Weatherzone**
   The Weather Company, $1.99

Detailed, reliable forecasts.

4. **Farm Manager**
   Stringybark Software, $17.99

Allows farmers to record and access cropping, livestock and machinery operations. Designed for grain and livestock farmers, but concept could be used in sugarcane.

5. **CalcSpray**
   FTI, $1.99

Calculate chemical mixes including total chemical required per tank, per area and water per area – features vary slightly.

6. **Tank Mix by DuPont**
   DuPont, Free

The DuPont TankMix Calculator App allows you to easily calculate the amount of product you will need to treat a specific field area, the amount of product you need to apply to a specific tank size, the amount of water you’ll need to treat a specific field area or the amount of product you need to get the desired volume to volume ratio.

7. **Commander Compass Lite**
   Pavel Ahafonau, Free

Handy tool.

8. **FreeSpirit**
   Claire Holmes, Free

Converts your iPhone into a spirit level.

9. **Unit Converter (Converber)**
   Summit Applications, $0.99

Convert units of all types - for example acres to hectares.

10. **Calculator ++**
    FoxSoft Inc, Free

Scientific calculator app which is easy to use.

11. **Flashlight**
    John Honey Software, Free

Turns your phone into a flashlight.

12. **Skype**
    Skype Software, Free

Allows voice or video calling via the internet.

13. **Flipboard**
    Flipboard Inc, Free

Compiles news sources you visit regularly, including Twitter, Facebook. Saves time finding pages you regularly visit.

12. **Chemical Safety Data Sheets**
    ThatsMyStapler Inc, $2.99

This app displays International Chemical Safety Cards [ICSC] produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Office (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). An ICSC is very similar to an Material Safety Data Sheet [MSDS], a standard reference document from the manufacturer for chemical information and is required, for safety purposes, to be kept in any place where workers face possible exposure to those chemicals. Use the information in this app to augment occupational health and safety when working with the applicable chemicals as an adjunct to MSDS or when MSDS are unavailable.

13. **First Aid by Australian Red Cross**
    3 Sided Cube, Free

Simple, free and it could save a life. Instant access to information to help you handle the most common first aid emergencies.
Drainage, laser levelling a high priority in Innisfail

By John Flynn

The sky over the Silkwood district is blue and cloudless as the Singh brothers, Harpreet (Happy) and Jassi set to work on a glorious September morning at their cane farm near the banks of Liverpool Creek. For once, the weather gods are being relatively kind to the cane growers of a district which, in recent years, has copped one of the most savage beatings Mother Nature can dish out.

As the Australian Canegrower tours the paddocks with the Singh brothers, it’s obvious that this is clearly the best harvest season in a long time. On one side of the Bruce Highway, a paddock of last season’s Q208 July planting is standing tall. Across the road, another paddock of Q208 ratoon crop, harvested in the first couple of rounds, is bouncing back quickly, green and lush, thanks to some moderate rainfall in the early part of the harvest season.

The downside of a wet July and some additional gentle rain in the weeks since is that about three weeks has been lost to crushing at the South Johnstone and Tully Mills to which the Singhs supply cane. The upshot is that, weather permitting, next year’s crop should be bountiful as the mills head towards an anticipated finish to crushing of mid-to-late November.

“This year with the harvest we’ve had, so far, a very good season, beautiful weather,” a jubilant Happy Singh tells the Australian Canegrower.

“We planted 75 hectares this year again; we’ve got 330 hectares altogether with 30 hectares under bananas and 300 hectares under cane.

“This year already in the second round we’ve cut what we had in the last years and that’s with two rounds to go. We planted 90 hectares last year and that planting helped a lot.”

To understand the significance of the planting effort and the transformation of this Liverpool Creek property since the Singh family purchased it immediately following Cyclone Yasi in 2011, one only needs to cast their mind back to the morning of February 3, 2011. On that fateful day, emergency services spent hours queued up at the Liverpool Creek bridge, immediately north of the Singh family farm, waiting for the torrent to

**SMARTCANE**

**Key learnings**

- Brothers Happy and Jassi Singh have spent copious man hours re-establishing a successful cane and banana farm in the Innisfail district.
- Laser levelling, a costly process but assisted by Reef Rescue, has allowed the Singh’s farm to drain properly, increasing land available for cane.
- The Singhs have also implemented a high rise sprayer and variable flow directional spraying unit, to use pesticides more effectively and reduce run off.
Ease so they could reach the districts worst impacted by the eye of category five Cyclone Yasi.

No-one will ever really know how much water poured down Liverpool Creek on that morning as the off-the-scale event took out the measuring equipment upstream. Suffice to say, in a catchment which was already one of Australia’s wettest with an average rainfall in the vicinity of 4.5 metres, the impact was profound and the Singhs had an almost exercise in land management ahead of them to re-establish the property as a viable cane farming enterprise.

“After Cyclone Yasi we did not cut much here and last season was not a very good season either,” Happy Singh explains.

“This was an old farm, a rundown farm and we spent a lot of time cleaning drains and establishing drainage systems.”

Central to the process of re-establishing the farm has been the costly but highly effective process of laser levelling of paddocks in what, to use a colloquialism, is pancake clay soil country with high rainfall that has a tendency to drain poorly. The challenge here, as it is for many of the lowland cane growers of the Wet Tropics rain belt, is to get the water away from the crop quickly, minimising the loss of nutrient into the Great Barrier Reef catchment and maximising productivity.

The solution hasn’t come cheap, with the Singhs purchasing a 350 horsepower tractor, a tractor-hauled land plane (scraper and bucket system utilising federal government Reef Rescue funding) and the necessary hairline laser levelling electronics to get the job done. But the impact is obvious at ground level in the fallowed paddocks that are hilled up ready for planting, where issues of fall have been have been addressed and the paddocks, despite the flat ground, angle away gently towards the drains. In the process, “dead spots” where water gathers at the expense of farm productivity are largely eliminated.

“We have high rainfall and low ground and if we get a good rain system it goes through. That’s why we’re spending a lot of money - $85,000 on the laser level to help the farming,” Mr Singh said.

“For example, we had a thirty acre block and there was four acres in the middle that was dead.

“We would put cane, fertiliser and chemical there and we would never have any production because the water stayed in it.

“We were losing four acres in income plus we were losing the fertiliser and the chemical most times.

“With the laser, we put in drainage systems and make the ground higher so the water doesn’t stay there and we’ve got an extra four acres from that.”

The progressive approach to cane farming doesn’t stop there with the Singhs also taking advantage of opportunities available through the federal government’s Reef Rescue initiative to deliver productivity gains, at the same time as achieving better outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Ready to go for the new crop is a high rise sprayer and variable flow directional spraying unit, purchased in round four and five of the Reef Rescue program, that will provide the necessary flexibility to be able to apply specific herbicide only when needed and satisfy the core objective of the Reef Rescue program - to use pesticides more efficiently and reduce losses to waterways. It’s a project Happy and Jassi Singh are clearly proud of, given they managed the construction locally and in the process achieved significant cost savings while delivering the desired outcome.

At the core of the unit is a Massey Ferguson tractor mounted on a raised platform, with drive to the wheels provided by a rear-wheel-drive chain driven system and a single front wheel for easy manoeuvrability. The combination of two tanks, pumps and nozzles mounted at three levels from the lower nozzles up to a ten metre, seven row boom means herbicide can get where it needs to go with minimal waste or spray drift.

“We could not have afforded the high rise without the help of Reef Rescue and we made sure we shopped around to achieve value,” Mr Singh said.
If we had gone to a manufacturer it would have cost $100,000–$120,000 but we had a local welder, I took it to him and he could make the frame.

“We bought the gear, bought the tractor and built it for under $50,000.”

Mr Singh said there were important benefits in having a high rise sprayer on farm, in that they could choose to spray when the conditions were right and make more efficient use of herbicide by applying it on an as-needs basis, rather than relying on a spraying contractor periodically during the season.

“This means we can go in when the weather is nice, we don’t have to rush and it doesn’t matter if there is a little bit of rain or wind, we can wait for when the conditions are right and that is very important to us,” Mr Singh said.

“The ten metre boom means we can do things more quickly and with the bigger tank we can do as much as ten acres in half an hour.

“We save a lot of time and we can control everything from the tractor with the controller.”

The commitment to progressive farming techniques and environmentally sound farm management practices in Australia’s wet tropics are a natural progression for a family that has generations of farming in the blood, progressing back to their ancestral roots in the Punjab of Northern India.

A 21st century take of the immigrant success story on which Australia’s sugarcane industry was built, the progression to this point of the Singh family farming enterprise is remarkable, given, as Happy Singh tells it, the family arrived in Australia in 1990 with very little money and a dream.

“I was 21 when we came here and Jassi was 16, we were so young,” Mr Singh said.

“We had $20 in the pocket, we bought a car, a Sigma, and the four of us, we started travelling and working on farms.”

The family picked vegetables in Bowen, chipped cotton in Boggabilla and picked grapes and citrus in Grifths to gather enough money to buy their first farm, a citrus farm in New South Wales.

With family ties in North Queensland, the Singhs moved north in 2003 to farm bananas and sugarcane and with Happy and Jassi now married with young families of their own, it was time to settle in for the long haul and work together as a family to build the business.

“We’re still working as a family, working all together,” Happy said of the family’s business philosophy.

“We’re from a non-English background, not very good education but now the kids; we like to give them a good education.

“My son is doing law, the other wants to be an engineer. And my daughter, she wants to be a teacher.”
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Farm clearance auction 1st October
9.30am lot 1 Fisherma n rd. Edmonton (beside Cairns speedway) John Deere 8440, 4640, 4040, 3140, Massey 178 multi power restored, 2705 air cab, 178 not running. Fits 640 with 1300 hrs on 7.50x24 and 18.4x38 (33in clearance) restored, 886 inter a/c, 860 Massey extendahoe backhoe a/c, Toft 6000 swinging knife 3306 cat, Kubota M950DT a/c, Case 2290 a/c, JI 185b track loader a/c, Komatsu pc300 excavator, various implements + more machinery for more info to www.dmsdavlan.com.au. au or phone 07 4051 0300

HBM Stripper 900 litre Croplands Mister – No Pump. 0488 050 017 (Innisfail area)

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2012 model New Holland T390, duals front and rear, brand new never used $200,000.00 plus gst. Liquid fertiliser applicator 6000 litre, 5 Rows, Macknade welding works $15,000.00 plus get. 07 4777 4291, 0417 776 230 or 0408 187 087
4 x Side Dress Coulters, good condition $3,300. 0408 494 128

P&H HD 9 tyne ripper, MF65 with remotes, 6001 Hardi spray tank with Irvin boom frame, Hodge single row cutaway, Hodge 4 furrow plough. 0428 180 140

Used Honda CTX 200 Bushlander Ag Motorbike, 2009 model, only 1600 kms, excellent condition current model (half new price) $2,750. 0429 483 815 (Home Hill area)

2013 John Deere 3520 full track cane harvester in good condition. 0417 648 543

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Case Magnum 8910, 4x4, 170hp, air cab, GC. $26,000 + GST. Weight transfer hitch hooked to 14T gooseneck air compressor. 0427 157 025

McCormic MTX140 Tractor. $42,500. Ford motor 6cyl fully reconditioned. $7,500. 07 49541327

Greenfield ride on mower, deluxe model 34” cut, 25hp motor, lights, diff lock, new battery, excellent condition. $3,500 ono. 0488 541 660

Harvester front track, Caterpillar idlers, new and still in crate. Complete with shafts ready to fit to harvester. Paid $1,500. Sell for $1,250. 0488 541 660

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Tractor tyres of all sizes. 07 4168 4664 all hours.
Wanted To Buy Topper to suit early Austoft 7700. must be in good condition. 0418 734 390

Weather report

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<th>Location</th>
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(Zero indicates either no rain or no report was sent). These rainfall figures are subject to verification. Cardwell’s year to date amount is inaccurate due to equipment failure as a result of cyclone damage. 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 Bureau of Meteorology’s Commercial Weather Services Unit.

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