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CHAIRMAN’S COMMENT

We are only a few days out from polling day. At the time of print, the LNP has released three positive agriculture policies, and Labor has just released their agriculture policy – which seems to be more a holding pattern and a disappointment.

Alf Cristaudo, CANEGROWERS Chairman

Cover: CANEGROWERS CEO Steve Greenwood (left) and Chairman Alf Cristaudo (right) spoke with current Qld Ag Minister Tim Mulherin (centre left) and Shadow Andrew Cripps (centre right) prior to the Qld election. Photo by Jasmine Hunt.

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Last Sunday, I couldn’t help but laugh out loud while watching the television.

I tuned in to Channel 7 to watch the Sunday Night program, for the touted segment on sugar consumption.

The segment itself was sensationalist to say the least, designed to make people tune in and completely biased without any regard or mention of a balanced diet. However, after the show finished I kept my TV tuned to 7 for the My Kitchen Rules show which was touring north Queensland, and was that night based in Ingham (I wanted to see if I could spot anyone I knew, of course!).

My Kitchen Rules’ task for the amateur chefs? Cooking with a focus on including sugar! (A great episode by the way, if you’re into reality cooking shows.)

However, the sheer hypocrisy of the Channel 7 programming made me laugh. How confusing for consumers! But, as we know, television is not designed to tell us “that everything is fine in moderation – that’s boring – it’s designed to sell advertising.”

This was certainly evident on Sunday night!

Jasmine Hunt

Golden tips

Free farm safety info sessions: regional tour

Self-employed and cane grower employers can take advantage of a series of free information sessions which are being held in every sugar region in the coming month. CANEGROWERS is encouraging growers to participate so they can quickly and simply get up to speed with the practical application of new requirements for health and safety on-farm. Harmonised work health and safety legislation is currently being introduced across Australia.

Meetings still to come this month include Mossman, Tablelands, Mulgrave, Babinda, Innisfail, Tully, Herbert River, Burdekin, Proserpine, Mackay and northern NSW.


Media Watch

Anti sugar segment on 7 Network uninformed, sensationalist

By Suzi Moore

- **Correlation doesn’t support claims:** Australia’s sugar consumption has dropped by almost a quarter in the last 30 years – but obesity & diabetes has tripled in this time.
- **Singles out sugar when weight loss is after reduction of processed carbohydrates:** Singling out one part of our diet is unhelpful and misleading.
- **Energy in energy out:** balanced, healthy diet & exercise is key.
- **Sugar is a natural sweetener:** it’s about moderation and balance.

You know that the anti-sugar lobby is barking up the wrong tree when scientists and nutritionists are the first to rear up against claims which are unhelpful and mislead the public. That’s what happened when the Seven Network gave the author of Sweet Poison air time during a prime Sunday night viewing slot last fortnight.

The debate seems just plain crazy when you consider the inverse correlation between the three-fold rise in obesity and diabetes since 1980 – at direct odds with falling domestic consumption – which has declined by almost a quarter over the same time. Make no mistake – these nutritionists are not promoting sugar consumption – they are however saying to stick to the science; and that demonising one part of our diet is unhelpful and misleading.

In the words of dietitian/nutritionist, Susie Burrell, who wrote after seeing the broadcast “Sugar isn’t evil, it’s processed foods that aren’t so sweet” She goes on to say many of the claims made in titles such as Sweet Poison are sensationalised and ill-informed, pushed by a single, unqualified, powerfully speaking, legally trained professional who himself found dietary success by eliminating “sugar” from his diet.

She goes on to clarify: “What is less frequently discussed in this context is that if you eliminate processed food from your diet you will lose weight. In fact, by eliminating anything from your diet, whether it is sugar, alcohol, fat or processed carbohydrates, you will lose weight. Unfortunately this is not an exciting media story.”

Personally speaking, I love a sweet treat: a gingerbread man or a slice of birthday cake is something to be savoured. So I’m glad that the consensus from nutritionists seems to be that at the end of the day, an occasional sweet treat is not the biggest threat to your waistline.

It is balancing calories in and calories out; balancing a healthy diet with exercising (exercising) which is the key to being fit, healthy and happy.

Your comments to suzi_moore@canegrowers.com.au or call 07 3864 6431.
RD&E reforms and supportive government policies will see the industry deliver more value

By Alf Cristaudo, CANEGROWERS Chairman

As I write, the research, development and extension (RD&E) information field meetings have begun in north Queensland.

During these meetings, the team will explain the logic and rationale behind the reforms and the structures that underpin the package of changes and why the new arrangements are the vital next step for RD&E for the sugar industry.

I won’t reiterate what many have already heard and more will hear during the rest of this month. In the areas where meetings are still to be held I urge you to attend and find out more.

The restructure of BSES Limited and the transition to Sugar Research Australia (SRA) will continue after the field meetings through to the formal industry ballot.

This will be held in late August 2012 to seek the support of growers and millers (all potential levy payers) for a new single industry owned company (SRA) with an initial three year statutory levy (2013, 2014, 2015) - 35 cents each for millers and growers.

This will replace the current SRDC levy and BSES and SRL fees and charges.

This sugar RD&E reform package creates funding certainty (which has been absent the last five years) and stability for RD&E in the sugar industry.

It will allow SRA to focus entirely on RD&E performance and delivering a full suite of R&D extension packages to local industry in various forms.

All industry stakeholders have a vital role to play.

Your industry needs your support to kick start this new era in RD&E. With your acceptance of the new reforms will see a move to local extension models which will give you the local industry- ownership and control of the way all available R&D is delivered, to a wider audience of grassroots growers.

The new structures will generate more funding and access to more federal government matching funds for greater project funding that will meet the fully aligned industry strategic direction and priorities.

We are only a few days out from polling day. At the time of print, the LNP has released three positive agriculture policies, and Labor has just released their agriculture policy – which seems to be more a holding pattern and a disappointment.

There is still time for the government to come up with positive policies for agriculture, but it at least requires the removal of red and green tape that is strangling our growers, and support in the other areas included in the six-point CANEGROWERS election policy platform.

RD&E on a sound footing and supportive rather than restrictive government policies and regulations, coupled with reasonable weather patterns (that unfortunately we cannot influence!) will see this industry deliver much more value to its stakeholders and the economy of the state and nation.

---

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CANEGROWERS says Labor ag policy weak

CANEGROWERS says the agriculture policy released by Labor this week is weak, focusing on a holding-pattern of maintenance and not putting increased focus and investment where it is needed – even though the big issues and how to address them have been clearly spelt out in the lead-up to the election.

“The current system is broken. We’ve clearly spelt out the six areas which need to be addressed and how, and we’ve had some great direct responses to our election platforms from other parties, but our calls seem to have fallen on deaf ears in the Labor policy,” says CANEGROWERS CEO, Steve Greenwood. “Holding a line which we have made abundantly clear is not working, is no way to support one of the State’s biggest industries.”

CANEGROWERS says there is still time for Labor to put a renewed focus on the important industry. “There is still a week before Queensland votes. We are strongly urging the Labor government to rethink its approach to agriculture and come out with some hard-hitting responses to CANEGROWERS election platforms. CANEGROWERS says they are expecting strong responses from all the major political parties on all six of the platforms outlined by CANEGROWERS.”

Townsville to host international meet

BSES Limited and the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT) are hosting the 2012 Agronomy and Agricultural Engineering workshop themed ‘Sustainable Sugarcane Production’ in Townsville on 9-14 September 2012.

These workshops are held every 3 years to allow more informal and in depth discussion between technologists than is possible at the major ISSCT Congress. A combination of agronomy and agricultural engineering topics was proposed for the forthcoming workshop because of the interdependence of these skills in a sustainable production system.

Sessions will be open to agronomists, the Australian industry’s technologists, farmers, students and agri-business representatives. Participants need to be/become members of ISSCT – for details please refer to the ISSCT website (issct. intnet.mu/index.html).

Tully by-election nominations

CANEGROWERS Returning Officer, Greg Trost has announced that nominations open on 23 March 2012 for the CANEGROWERS Tully By-Election to fill one vacancy on the Board of Tully Cane Growers Ltd (CANEGROWERS Tully). Nominations forms are available from CANEGROWERS Tully office or direct from the Returning Officer at CANEGROWERS Brisbane, phone 1800 177 159. The nomination form is also available on the CANEGROWERS website.

Candidate’s nomination

Candidates nominating for election must be an eligible grower (ie. a financial member of the CANEGROWERS local and State organisation). Also in those cases where the Membership (Cane Production Area [CPA]) is registered as a partnership, trust, company or an estate, then the nominee must be the authorised representative of that partnership, trust, company or estate to be eligible to nominate for election. Nomination forms must be signed by the eligible nominee and not less than six (6) members as defined in the constitution under clause 5.2 “members” at the date when supporting the nomination.

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- Tender 2: 12 Farms- A total of 1,301.74ha in Tully/Cardwell Region Farms from 41ha - 339ha
- Tender 3: 8 Farms- A total of 1,043.20ha in Ingham Region Farms from 35ha - 284ha

- Tenders for properties are welcome on individual, or a combination of farms, or entire portfolio
- The vendor reserves the right to exercise offers prior to the close of Tenders

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Endorsing candidate’s nomination

Non-individual growers (ie. partnerships, companies, trusts and estates) supporting the candidate’s nomination are subject to certain requirements. An eligible grower wishing to endorse another eligible grower’s nomination must be the authorised representative in those cases where the membership (CPA) is in the name of a company, trust or an estate. For partnerships, provided the signatory is one of the partners listed in the membership (CPA) then the endorsement by the individual member of the partnership supporting the nomination, will be acceptable without the need for an authorised representative form from the partnership for the person (ie. the person must be a partner within the relevant partnership) who is supporting the candidate’s nomination.

The closing date for nominations received by the Returning Officer at CANEGROWERS Brisbane, GPO Box 1032 Brisbane Qld 4001, is 5 pm on Monday, 16 April 2012.

Any grower seeking further information on the election requirements or process should contact CANEGROWERS Tully office or the Returning Officer on 1800 177 159.

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CANEGROWERS Tully Members Important Notice

Directors By-Election
Tully Cane Growers Ltd ACN 112 000 414

By-Election under the CANEGROWERS Tully Constitution

Nominations are invited from Tully Cane Growers Ltd (CANEGROWERS Tully) members to fill one (1) vacancy on the Board of CANEGROWERS Tully.

Nominations for the election of one (1) Director to the CANEGROWERS Tully Company Board close with the Returning Officer, CANEGROWERS, 190-194 Edward Street, Brisbane Qld 4000 (GPO Box 1032, Brisbane Qld 4001) at 5pm on Monday, 16 April 2012.

Nomination forms must be signed by the eligible nominee and not less than six (6) Members as defined in the Constitution under Clause 5.2 “Members” at the date when supporting the nomination.

Attention is also drawn to Clause 13.3 “Qualification for membership of the Board” of the CANEGROWERS Tully Company Constitution, and Schedule 2, Clause 8 “Nomination – Procedure” whereby a member which is a corporation, estate, partnership or trust must appoint one (1) authorised representative who may nominate for election as a Director.

Nomination forms and full particulars in regard to appropriate qualifications of nominees can be obtained from the Manager of CANEGROWERS Tully Company office or direct from the Returning Officer, on application to GPO Box 1032 Brisbane Qld 4001 or by phone 1800 177 159. The Nomination form is also available from the CANEGROWERS website.

Greg Trost
Returning Officer
GPO Box 1032 Brisbane Qld 4001

Tully Cane Growers Ltd ACN 112 000 414
3rd annual ASA forum brings together heads of sugar industry

By Jasmine Hunt

The leaders of the Australian sugar industry came together to discuss the big issues last fortnight, with the third annual Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASA) forum taking place in Brisbane.

Run by ASA, formed by CANEGROWERS and the Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC), the ASA forum presented speakers from within the industry and abroad, bookended by a debate between current Queensland Primary Industry Minister Tim Mulherin and Shadow Minister Andrew Cripps.

The day kicked off with a look at the overall global economic outlook, specifically surrounding agricultural commodities, then went into our regional perspective and domestic market challenges, before diving into research, development and extension. The say ended with the two politicians battling it out.

Global outlook for ag commodities

CANEGROWERS and ASA Chairman, Alf Cristaudo, formally opened the forum. He spoke of the tough seasons behind Queensland growers and lamented that unfortunately New South Wales growers are experiencing a tough season yet again. He welcomed all to the third annual forum, which are growing each year. First speaker of the day was Senior Economist with NAB Global Markets Research, David De Garis.

Mr De Garis spoke on the macro drivers for the sugar industry, and global issues for domestic growth. He said the US economy was showing some signs of an upturn, and consumer spending was up in the past month. He also mentioned there was a slowing of economic growth in Asia. Greece is still facing major issues, however the Australian retail industry showed the highest confidence levels of all industries in the NAB survey.

The next speaker was the Deputy Secretary of the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Phillip Glyde. Mr Glyde spoke about how global issues were affecting agricultural commodity prices. He said both summer and winter crop outlooks were expecting increases in production.

He said opportunities and challenges for the industry in the near future would include RD&E, government policies, community preferences and industry leadership. He also spoke about how important community preferences were, and mentioned the example of the recent debacle with live export of cattle. He said the future of the industry would depend on making decisions that would determine the long term stability of the industry, rather than making short term decisions.

Global sugar market

International guest, Czarnikow Director Toby Cohen, then took to the stage to discuss the global sugar market in detail. He mentioned the current growth in Indian production, which has spiked, although it hasn’t hit the levels it did six years ago. He said this indicates the Indian industry hasn’t over-extended itself (as it usually swings from boom to bust) and could achieve returns this year.

Mr Cohen then spoke about China, saying that the Chinese industry is looking to build its stock of domestic sugar, and they could be a potentially larger player in the market. He also said Chinese consumption was growing slightly. He also spoke about Brazil, saying that there had been a fall in green/g192 eld investment after the GFC however the Brazilian industry should see some growth this year.

Our region

After the global outlook, QSL CEO Greg Beashel spoke about the regional perspectives for the sugar industry. He said QSL’s focus in on the Asian market, and in 2010, 2.7 million tonnes were sent to 19 customers in the region. He mentioned that last year QSL could have sold twice the available crop to Asian customers – the demand for Aussie sugar is so high.

He said factors driving Asian growth included a growing population, high economic global growth, increasing household incomes, and westernisation of diets.

Domestic market

Up next was Sugar Australia General Manager, Russell Abotomey. Mr Abotomey spoke about the challenges of the Australian domestic sugar market. He said Australia’s ageing population, coupled with changing family structures and lifestyles presented challenges to the domestic market.

He said the recent negative press surrounding sugar was also a challenge, and that the supermarket duopoly of Coles and Woolworths was squeezing all suppliers. Mr Abotomey said the trend for supermarkets to supply their own brand name goods at low prices (most cheaper than cost) was a major challenge.

RD&E – other industries

After the look at global markets, the forum centred on RD&E from a broad range of industries. A highlight of this session included the Chairman of the Australian Dairy Industry Council, Chris Griffin, who gave an interesting insight into how RD&E works within the dairy sector.

After the session on RD&E, the current Queensland Minister for Primary Industries Tim Mulherin and his shadow, Andrew Cripps from the LNP debated the future of Australian agriculture.

Chair of ASMC, Quinton Hildebrand, closed the forum.

Top: CANEGROWERS Head - Economics, Warren Males, talks with Czarnikow’s Toby Cohen and QSL Chair Mike Carroll at the ASA forum.
Middle: NAB Senior Economist David De Garis, and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Phillip Glyde.
Bottom: Russell Abotomey, General Manager at Sugar Australia, caught up with Peter Twine, SRDC at the ASA forum.
State and Shadow Ministers for Agriculture face off at the ASA forum

The Queensland Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies came face to face in debate against his cabinet opponent the Shadow Agriculture Minister on their respective parties’ commitment to agriculture, coming up to the State election this week.

Hosted by Jessica van Vonderen, award winning host of 7.30 QLD and the presenter of ABC TV’s weekend news bulletins, the pressure was levelled on the Hon Tim Mulherin MP and the LNP’s Andrew Cripps, before a room packed to the rafters with heavy hitters from every corner of the sugarcane industry at the annual Australian Sugar Industry Alliance forum.

Presenting their visions for the future of agriculture and in particular the sugar industry, the two politicians professed their ‘out of cabinet’ friendship and agreed on many key policies including biosecurity and education and training. However, questions from the floor, mostly surrounding the high level of regulations placed on cane growers by the current state government ensured discussion centred on red and ‘green’ tape. Minister Mulherin promised if re-elected the Labor government would streamline the many layers of regulation into one return from growers – not hinting at removal but perhaps tying current regulatory requirements into one large document.

Shadow Minister Cripps reiterated the LNP’s previously publicised promise to remove many of the layers of regulatory red and green tape; however how this would be done was not elaborated upon.

Minister Mulherin then committed to the maintenance of current levels of research, development and extension funding.

Mr Cripps spoke about the need for agriculture to be back on the front burner and to be back in focus for the government, of which he said was missing from the current government. He spoke about the LNP’s commitment to a ‘four pillar’ economy, focussing on resources, tourism, construction and agriculture.

Questions from the floor concerning the ageing industry and the need for better education and training were answered in complexity by the two politicians, with Mulherin elaborating on investment in partnerships in education.

Cripps quipped that the loss of the two agricultural colleges in Dalby and the Burdekin would perhaps be a short-sighted decision, but that would only come to pass in the future.

Overall, both Cripps and Mulherin spoke about their overall passion for the sugar industry and its future.
Industry Spotlight

Overhead irrigation incentive scheme

By Warren Males, CANEGROWERS Head - Economics

CANEGROWERS and DERM are providing incentives for cost-effectively improving water use on farms.

The program aims to assist growers to increase the efficiency of overhead irrigation and achieve more profitable results from new irrigation systems.

This scheme is a critical part of the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative and has links to current industry adoption programs.

Applications will be assessed on merit.

It is anticipated the money available will be spent quickly, so growers are encouraged to apply as soon as possible so they do not miss out on the opportunity.

The closing date for applications is Thursday 31 May 2012.

The scheme provides for a 50% rebate to a maximum of $30,000 per farm or per ABN (pre-GST), of costs associated with improving the efficiency of on farm overhead irrigation systems.

Options to improve irrigation efficiency will target three areas:

1. Overhead system replacement and/or farm irrigation system upgrades:
   - Capital expenditure on new application equipment.
   - Improvements to existing application systems designed to increase application efficiency (not including repairs or replacement of worn system components).
   - Redevelopment of existing farm irrigation system design (eg. lane spacing layout) to improve application uniformity.

2. Pumping system replacement and/or existing farm pumping system upgrades:
   - Purchase of new pumping equipment matched to irrigation requirement for increased pumping and energy use efficiency.
   - Electric pump variable speed control devices where applicable.
   - Redevelopment of pumping installations where the required efficiency gains can be demonstrated.

3. Irrigation management:
   - Scheduling support systems including sensors and telemetry.
   - Automation equipment including valves, software or other equipment required to automate the starting and stopping irrigation systems.

An information kit and application form can be downloaded at www.canegrowers.com.au or obtained from your local CANEGROWERS office.

Sugar industry in focus at Rural Press Club

Rural journalists and leaders in agribusiness from all industries packed the United Services Club in Brisbane last fortnight to hear from Chair of Australian Sugar Milling Council and CEO of Mackay Sugar, Quinton Hildebrand.

Mr Hildebrand gave a broad overview of the world impacts on the Australian sugar industry, and its history so far. He also gave insights into why the Australian sugar industry is attracting attention from so many international investors.

He said that the world market for sugar was still growing, especially in Asia, and that the Australian sugar industry is seen as a clean, green, efficient and cost-effective option for investors in sugar.

He then answered questions from the floor and completed an interview with ABC Landline.
BSES advisory service moves to new model

In response to industry’s voice to ‘deliver extension differently’, BSES has announced the formation of the Professional Extension and Communications Unit (the PEC).

This Unit is one critical element in the implementation of the sugar research, development and extension (RD&E) reform package and active transition to Sugar Research Australia. BSES Chief Executive Officer Eoin Wallis said the PEC will fill a critical role in the provision of RD&E to the Australian sugar industry.

“The unit will comprise 13 staff, including communications and training specialists as well as nine development of cereals, communications and training specialists,” he said.

“Eight appointments have already been made in communications (2) and development officers (6) (based in Meringa, Burdekin, Mackay and Woodford). The remainder of the PEC Unit vacancies will be appointed over the coming months,” said Mr Wallis.

The PEC will interface with researchers (BSES, CSIRO, Universities, State Departments of Agriculture and agribusiness) to identify emerging technologies that could be integrated into commercial practice, evaluating their potential, testing them in semi-commercial conditions, determining how the promising technologies can be ‘packaged’ (how can the message be distributed and used), providing the ‘packages’ to groups of growers and others in the wider extension network (productivity companies, agribusiness) so that a broader audience can access the information.

The use of the information will lead to improved industry performance.

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"The last, but critical, role of the PEC is to be the ‘eyes and ears’ of BSES (and then Sugar Research Australia) to identify emerging issues requiring an R&D solution,” said Mr Wallis.

The PEC will have expertise in nutrient management, variety adoption, precision agriculture, harvester and machinery efficiency, irrigation, weed and pest management, cropping systems, soil health and biosecurity issues. The PEC will not be providing the advisory (one-to-one) activities previously supplied by BSES Extension Staff. The RD&E reforms see these interactions being provided through local arrangements utilising Productivity Services and a broader cohort of agribusiness organisations.

The use of the information will lead to improved industry performance.

Eoin Wallis, BSES Limited CEO
**Summary of recent market movement**

The March’12 contract expired during this reporting period (27 February to 9 March). A significant volume of sugar from Centre South Brazil was traded prior to the contract expiry date, as sugar prices on the export market were more favourable than Brazil’s domestic market. Elsewhere, market analysis centred on the strong crushes in Thailand and India, with most of this sugar being absorbed in the Asian region where demand is very firm. The March’12 contract opened at US26.23c/lb on Monday 27 February and closed at US23.66c/lb on Friday 9 March.

**Anticipation of global surplus influences market**

The growing expectation that the world market will move into surplus in 2012/13 continues to influence the market. Over recent months, global prices have been supported by a perceived shortage of available exports and continuing strong demand from key importing nations.

This scenario is expected to dissipate in the second half of 2012 when an Indian crop, following a potentially record Thai crop, will be ready for export, and analysts will be likely to have more certainty around the size and quality of the Centre South Brazil crop. At the same time, EU and Russian crops that have exceeded expectations will be ready for harvest and the Mexican crop will also mature. It is expected that Mexico will recover from the drought it has suffered this season.

In its March quarter *Agricultural Commodities* report, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) notes that, combined, these harvests will help push world sugar production in 2012 up by two million tonnes to 177.8 million tonnes. Analysts suggest this total production will lead to a global surplus of roughly six million tonnes.

**Australia well placed with structural deficit in Asia**

In the same report, ABARES notes expectations that world consumption is forecast to grow by 2.4 per cent in 2011–12 to 169.5 million tonnes. This is on the back of population growth and increasing disposable incomes in emerging Asian markets such as China and India.

This means that, in essence, the Asian market remains in a structural deficit. Demand for sugar significantly outweighs the supplies available from its domestic producers.

As Greg notes in his column (opposite page), this deficit is a positive situation for QSL and Australian sugar as we sell the majority of our sugar into this region. Australia provides significant advantages to Asian customers through our proximity and the quality of our product, so the demand for Australian sugar is expected to continue to remain firm.

QSL is almost fully sold for the 2011 season and continues to see strong demand for the 2012 season and beyond.
Asia deficit a benefit for Australian industry

By Greg Beashel, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer

Last week I was invited to speak at the Australia Sugar Industry Alliance’s 2012 conference.

I presented on market perspectives from Australia’s perspective as a regional producer.

The key message for us is that we are very much in the right place at the right time.

Sugar prices are strong compared to historic levels, our product is of very good quality, and we are selling into a structural deficit in the Asian market, which brings many benefits.

Although the world market is moving into a surplus, Asia is forecast to remain in a deficit over the coming years.

Domestic producers cannot keep pace with the strong demand for sugar in Asia, as a growing population, growing wealth and increasingly Westernised dietary patterns fuel the consumption of food.

This deficit, which we have anticipated for some time, will offer strong returns and provide opportunities for investment, expansion and the continuing growth of the Australian sugar industry.

QSL is well prepared for this and is acting to capture this opportunity. We have strong forward pricing in place for 2012 and prospects for prices above AUD $500 per tonne are realistic.

As I have mentioned previously in this column, we are expecting to deliver a record return this season, with our Seasonal Pool price currently between A$500 and A$520 per IPS tonne.

QSL’s long-term, sustainable business partnerships with customers in Asia, which are a fundamental feature of our business, are helping to underpin the strong demand as well.

Many of QSL’s key customers are in emerging markets that import raw sugar, such as Indonesia.

Given the large, and growing, demand in this country and its proximity to Australia, Indonesia is a very attractive market for Australian raw sugar market and is a real growth opportunity for QSL.

Additionally, in mature economies such as Japan and Korea – where QSL is the largest supplier – QSL continues to export significant volumes and hold strong customer relationships even though overall import growth is flatter than neighbouring Indonesia.

The benefit of the structural deficit is that we are able to sell sugar into the markets offering the strongest return for our members, the sugarcane growers and millers of Queensland.

Asia now represents roughly 90 per cent of QSL’s customer base.

When we compare that to 20 years ago, when Asia was just over half our customer base, it has been a remarkable shift that captures the story of Asian economic growth as well as the growing capability of our industry as a whole.
Reef Guardian Farmer program goes from strength to strength

By Sonia Ball

It has been just over a year since Mackay district cane grower Tony Ross became Mackay region’s first Reef Guardian Farmer.

Promotion of Mr Ross’s involvement in the program has brought with it a certain amount of recognition throughout the industry and community, and he is now well-known to be enthusiastically linked to this new initiative.

Mr Ross said his farming practices had changed little since signing on for the pilot program, and it was good more people were being made aware of the environmental work he had been undertaking as part of his day-to-day business.

“What has changed a lot in that time is the way I think about what I am going to do next,” Mr Ross told CANEGROWERS from his Marwood cane farm last week.

“It’s not that I am necessarily going to make a different decision, it’s that I’m more conscious of thinking those decisions through.”

The Reef Guardian Farmers pilot program was launched in early 2011 to highlight the voluntary environmental practices adopted by farmers.

Mr Ross has been farming on Marwood Road about 20km south of Mackay, for the past 20 years.

“We (with wife Marjorie and daughter Elizabeth) have around 250 hectares of land under cane.”

“I’m what most people would call your average grower,” Mr Ross said.

“We’re not really doing anything differently, but we’re more aware now I suppose, and that is affecting the way we make decisions going forward.”

Mr Ross said of the 17 other Reef Guardian Farmers in the program across the regions from Cairns to Calliope, eight of them were cane growers.

Among those is fellow cane grower Wayne Vickers, who became the second Mackay region Reef Guardian Farmer late last year.

“I am not surprised there are so many growers as the majority of them already are, in practice, Reef Guardian Farmers.”

Mr Ross said it was not long after his initial meeting with Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian project manager Kate Steel in January 2011 that he became aware of, and benefitted from, the supportive nature and structure of the pilot program, and the people delivering it.

“We meet regularly, and it is quite often informal. Sometimes it is a chat on the phone, sometimes it’s a visit and sometimes we’ll go for a drive around the farm and talk about what we’re doing – they’re extremely supportive and that makes an enormous difference when you’re working together to achieve a common goal.

“Our goal, as part of our every-day work practices, is to maintain and improve responsible and sustainable farm management practices,” he said.

Ms Steel, based in Mackay, talking about the pilot program, said GBRMPA wanted to recognise and promote the great work farmers were doing that was good for business, and good for the Great Barrier Reef.

“It’s true that there are many farmers out there who already are ‘guardians’, and this program seeks to recognise and promote them,” Ms Steel said.

“Pilot growers like Tony and Wayne are helping us work out the definition of a Reef Guardian. Everyone does things differently, but there are some common aims among the Reef Guardians, such as improving soil health, water use and energy efficiency, and contributing to their rural communities.”

“While we are still working out the pilot program we are able to take Expressions of Interest from farmers and graziers,” Ms Steel said.

For further information: contact Kate Steel on 07 4951 3454 or 0429 637 112.
Healthy soil is productive soil

It’s mid-March already, and that means crushing season is just around the corner! Can you believe it?

This year, the weather has been a lot more conducive to growing than it was the past two seasons across most regions, and many growers are looking to the following seasons with renewed optimism.

Now’s the perfect time to ensure your soil is up to scratch - and soil tests are the easiest way to do just that.

This advertising feature includes a number of different products and services designed to help you achieve the best from your soil, and ensure your crop nutrition is in tip-top shape.

Jasmine Hunt

Thinking lime? Think Dolomite Distributions

Supplied by Dolomite Distributions P/L

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It only takes ten days from when your soil is tested to when we can analyse the results and create a fertiliser plan that is specific to you.

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Visit your local CANEGROWERS office or call 1800 624 122 now to organise your FREE soil test.

Terms and conditions of our offer: available until 31 May 2012 and limited to one free soil test per grower.
It pays to be more certain of our soils

Supplied by Ravensdown Fertiliser Australia

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Once soil nutrient levels are known, the most appropriate type and quantity of fertiliser can be applied to correct deficiencies and improve plant performance. Without this basic information, we are simply guessing so really are gambling with our future profits.

But how do I go about getting the soil test done?

Taking the sample is as easy as the ABC below. Your local CANEGROWERS' office has a Ravensdown Soil Sample Kit with soil probes and clear instructions.

Simply pick up a soil sample kit, go out to the block and take a sample, return the sample to the CANEGROWERS' office and 14 days later you will receive the results with a reef-compliant fertiliser recommendation.

If you have any questions after receiving the results, your local account manager can help you and can be contacted through calling the customer centre on 1800 624 122.

A) Select the sites for taking soil cores

The cores should be representative of the whole area, taken in a grid or cluster pattern. Remember this sample will be used to make fertiliser input recommendations for your cane for up to the next five years, so selecting a representative area in the block is important!

TIPS

1. Avoid areas where large amounts of mill by-products have been dumped.
2. Avoid unusually high or low fertility spots.
3. Avoid compacted or wet areas.
4. Consider timing: a sample taken immediately after the harvest of a cane block when soil residual levels would be at their lowest nutrient point is the ideal time.

B) Taking the soil cores

Using a soil probe, take a minimum of 10 individual cores across the block to an approximate depth of 20 cm. Take the sample from the shoulder of the cane row (i.e. midway between the centre of the cane row and the centre of the inter row). Then place the cores into the plastic bag provided in the Soil Test Kit.

TIP

1. If the core sample is too large, collect into a bucket, mix the sample around and put a representative sub-sample into the plastic bag provided.

C) Return the samples

Securely close each sample in a sample bag and label clearly. Return the samples and the forms to your local CANEGROWERS' office who will send samples to Analytical Research Laboratories (ARL).

ARL is a modern laboratory, using state-of-the-art equipment and highly qualified staff to offer a comprehensive testing service with two tests available. Both tests include the analysis of organic carbon (Walkely and Black) and phosphorus (BSES) as required by Reef Regulations.

ARL is internationally-accredited to ISO 17025 and is a member of the Australasian Soil and Plant Analytical Council.

Soil testing at Rocky Point: sugarcane grower Richard Skopp and Ravensdown’s Bruce Keenan.
Supplied by Ergon

The number of electrical incidents associated with cane harvesting in regional Queensland continue to fall with the lowest number in six years recorded in 2011 according to an Ergon Energy spokesman.

General Manager Service Delivery Northern Paul Ryan said just 15 reported incidents last year was a significant decline on previous years.

“The number of incidents has been trending downwards from 45 in 2006 to last year’s low number,” he said.

“We put this down to Ergon Energy working closely with the industry and our concerted marketing campaigns to promote electrical safety messages – especially “Look up and Live” - which seem to be getting through.

“There is growing awareness about the importance of electrical safety within the industry and a willingness to ask for help and or advice on safety issues - all of which have contributed to the downward trend,” Mr Ryan said.

He said of the 150 incidents over the last six years, 50% have been associated with cane harvesters, 35% with haul-out vehicles and the rest made up of cane fires, cane trains or tractors making breaks in the paddocks.

Mr Ryan said while the number of incidents continued to trend down, there was no room for complacency about electrical safety.

“Fifteen incidents is still too high and the Burdekin area of North Queensland continues to have the highest number of electrical incidents with over 60% of total reported incidents in 2011,” he said.

“That is in part due the additional infrastructure providing power to pumps on many headlands and the fact they still burn in excess of 90% of their crop.”

The Mackay/Proserpine region has made good progress in reducing the number of electrical incidents over the past few years and Wide Bay remains the lowest with none reported last year.

Mr Ryan said Ergon Energy safety staff would continue to work closely with the industry in the lead up to this year’s harvest which is expected to start in June.

The breakdown of electrical incidents per region, since 2006, appears in the table printed below.

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<td>15</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Next time you’re working near overhead powerlines, think of your loved ones.
Contact with powerlines can kill, so for your sake and theirs, please look up and live.

For electrical safety information specific to your industry, call our Community Safety Team on 1300 736 349.

19 March 2012 | Australian Canegrower 17
Key learnings
- At 84 years, Con Zappala has seen his share of bad seasons, but the past two were some of the worst.
- Con and his son Charlie Zappala, a CANEGROWERS Cairns director, cut about 7,000 tonnes of cane in a good year.
- They also run a contracting harvesting business in the Babinda area.
- The past few months have shown promise for a better season in 2012.

By John Flynn
In the distance it’s a rare sight for the sweltering peak of summer in the Babinda district.

Normally shrouded in rain clouds at this time of year, the great northern Alp Bartle Frere is visible in all of its glory from the Zappala family farm at Woopen Creek.

As he climbs down from the tractor, his shirt drenched with perspiration, there’s a spring in the step of veteran cane farmer Con Zappala. In fine spirits, he thrusts forward the unmistakably firm welcoming hand of a bloke who worked the cane knife in his youth.

Still spritely for a man of 84, Con has seen his share of bad seasons since making the journey to Australia from Catania, Sicily, in his youth.

But rarely during his 60-odd years in the district, have any seasons brought more pain than the back-to-back misery of 2010 and 2011; the two years that brought the disastrous wet harvest and the misery of Cyclone Yasi.

Looking back, the Babinda district fared arguably worse than anywhere from the La Nina climatic phase that delivered the record wet “dry season” of 2010, before spawning the category five storm which hit the region on the evening of 2 February 2011.

In a way it was history repeating itself. In the month of October 2010, the wettest October on record at that point in the Innisfail and Babinda districts, the Southern Oscillation Index rose to a level not seen since the months prior to the great 1918 cyclone which wiped out Innisfail.

But farmers weren’t to know what would unfold when they commenced the harvest of what looked to be a bumper 2010 crop.

“Never, never, I’ve been cutting cane, I’ve been harvesting, we’ve never had a year bad like that one ... wet,” Con Zappala says before pausing.

“We’ve had rain, but we’ve always had enough time to harvest the cane.

“That was very, very hard to get the cane out too, we had around about 70 acres standover on this farm here.”

It was a scene repeated from the high country of Bartle Frere to the river flats around Mirriwinni and Eubenangee, with the low lying paddocks worst affected.

As good as the 2010 crop was, paddocks became waterlogged and harvesting impossible in some areas as the rain refused to relent.

Charlie Zappala (left) and his father Con run a contract harvesting business in addition to their own cane farm in the Babinda district. The past two years have been some of the worst seasons ever experienced by the two growers. Photos by John Flynn.
While Babinda was far enough North of Yasi’s eye to avoid widespread structural damage, the storm’s impact on the cane crop was severe. Charlie Zappala inspects plant cane on his Babinda farm.

Con’s son Charlie, a CANEGROWERS Cairns director, remembers 2010 as nothing short of a disaster.

“It rained on and on and on right through till Christmas, in the end eventually we pulled up stumps just before Christmas Day,” Mr Zappala recalls while sipping a cold drink in the shade beneath the family home.

“The mill shut and there was something like 70,000 tonne of standover left in the former Babinda mill area and farmers couldn’t get spraying done, couldn’t get fertiliser into the blocks, very little planting done, a lot of damage to the plant that was put in.

“It was total devastation by the end of the year.”

Little did growers know there was worse, much worse to come, with category one Cyclone Tasha hitting the region on Christmas Day, followed by Yasi, the biggest and most powerful cyclone to hit the district in living memory, overnight on February 2.

While Babinda was far enough north of Yasi’s eye to avoid widespread structural damage, the storm’s impact on the cane crop was severe. Stressed by the extreme winds in which sticks of cane were thrashed about, stools of ratoon crops were damaged, plants stopped growing and put out shoots.

“What little decent cane we did have on our high country because the cyclone came so early, cane was at a very young stage, short, and a lot of the tops broke off,” Charlie Zappalla recalls.

“Hence any good cane that we did have, Cyclone Yasi took care of and turned it into rubbish.

“That’s what you would call it, you wouldn’t call it cane.

“After that we picked ourselves up and had probably the worst harvesting season we’ve ever had and worst crop we’ve ever cut in the history of this area as far as I could remember back.

“I’ve never seen a year like that.”

On the family’s Woopen Creek property alone, Con Zappala recalls that about
3380 tonnes were harvested, compared with about 7,000 in a decent year.

“I’ve never cut that low before, in a bad year we would have been around 4,000 tonnes,” he says.

With about two hundred hectares under cane on family properties at Woopen Creek, Bartle Frere and Garradunga, as well as a contract harvesting business, the losses from Cyclone Yasi quickly mounted for the Zappalas.

“We harvested a little bit more because we had standover cane which didn’t go big tonnages but went 30 tonne an acre average, which is around 74 tonne to the hectare” Charlie Zappala recalls of the lean harvest.

“When you look at the area average at just under 40 tonnes to the hectare, that looks alright.

“Where we suffered badly was with the sugar, we’re one and one quarter units behind the mill on this farm (Woopen Creek).”

In a year made worse by the heartbreaking closure of the Babinda Mill within days of Cyclone Yasi, there were further tests to come.

Another unseasonal rain event last October that dumped close to one metre of rain on the Babinda district took the edge off a herculean planting effort in what is now part of the South Johnstone mill area.

Restoring farms to maximum productivity is a gradual process, something which Babinda district farmers know only too well having only recently returned to reasonable tonnages following Cyclone Larry in 2006. Once again it will take 3-4 years to plant out damaged ratoon crops, but Mr Zappala says farmers deserve credit for picking themselves up in what have been and continue to be, extremely difficult times.

“I’ve got to give the growers their due,” Charlie Zappala says.

“Year 2011, they all picked up, something like 27% of the South Johnstone area was replanted last year and I don’t think that’s ever been done before.

“So we’re breaking records one way and probably breaking records back the other way, which is hard to do when you’ve been knocked down for so long coming off that wet season.”

Mr Zappala says the hearts of fellow farmers will go out to those growers in parts of the district whose tonnages for 2012 are likely to once again be impacted by heavy rain during the planting phase, but from an overall perspective, weather permitting, the crop is showing promise.

“That’s what we’re looking at, a promising crop, as far as the rest of the area going there’s some sort of crop out there,” a cautious Charlie Zappala says as he casts an eye over the family farm.

“These couple of months once we get out of the wet, there’s a bit of time to go before the start of the crushing.

“The last few months have been promising and the cyclone season, we can probably breathe a sigh of relief if we don’t get anything and we could be looking at a reasonable crop.”

Charlie Zappala and his father Con are hoping for a better season this year. Photos by John Flynn.
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800 series Billet Planter in good condition. 07 4067 5327 (Babinda).

Positions Vacant

WANTED: Farm Manager for cane farm north of Mackay. Able to work unsupervised and be skilled in machinery operation/maintenance, irrigation and chemical spraying. Accommodation provided; 3 bedroom house. HR and UD license desirable. 0419 689 503 or 07 4958 8200.

Work Wanted

I am a semi-retired farmer looking to have my own tractor and trailer as part of a carting contract in the Mackay area. Willing to purchase my own tractor and trailer as part of a carting contract in the Mackay area. Ph. 0419 689 509 or 07 4045 2322 (Mulgrevale)

12 or 14 tonne Carta tipper coupled to about 150 H.P tractor. Ph. 07 4777 7362 or 07 47 777 150 (Macknade)

Wanted cane harvesting job. I have good harvesting refs. Also mechanical and welding experience. email ozzy1411@me.com.

Property

LAND FOR LEASE.Approx.13ha xcane land (last crop 2011) close to Sarina 0429 433 454.

CANE FARM POA. 3 minutes north of Sarina. Total farm area 112.32ha. Full plant/equipment included. Large machinery/work shed. Several bores/wells. Large brick veneer 5 bedroom home. Excellent condition. Landscaped gardens. Ph. 07 4956 6467.

Wanted to lease cane farm approx. 10,000 tonne, in Marian or Mirani area, preferably with house. Ph: 0467 597 551.

WANTED TO LEASE cane farm approx. 10,000 tonne, in Marian or Mirani area. 0467 597 551.

owed Mega litre Bore, 4 Bedroom Home. 105 megs Kinchant Dam water, 146 megs 2 bores. Easy farm to work, current crop looking good, machinery list available, $890,000. 0437 342 457.

CANE FARM P.O.A. 5 minutes north of Sarina. Total farm area 112.32ha. Full plant/equipment included. Large machinery/work shed. Several bores/wells. Large brick veneer 5 bedroom home. Excellent condition. Landscaped gardens. Ph. 07 4956 6467.

WEATHER REPORT

Location

Recorded rainfall in mm

Average rainfall

7 days to 9 am

Year to date

Jan to Mar

06/03/2012 13/03/2012

Mossman

191

0

997

1371

Mareeba AP

27

34

468

663

Cairns

142

139

900

1260

Mt Sophia

248

258

1044

1824

Innisfail

119

256

1178

1763

Tully

328

140

1374

2088

Cardwell

166

98

932

1302

Lucinda

170

297

1619

1258

Ingham

275

115

1280

1195

Abergowrie

99

126

842

1079

Towenville

29

55

550

747

(Note 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

CANEgrowers RETIREment FUnd

www.crf.net.au

Phone 07 3864 6444 for a Product Disclosure Statement

Out work wanted for 2012 cane season, licence.

HR, fork lift, tower crane, license. 25 years experience equipment offshore, prior, D-6 Cat & farm equipment. Own accomodation.

Contact Perry 0427 164 722.

Maintenance fitter looking for work on a cane farm, 22 years experience in the sugar industry. Currently working in South Africa. pchitoogo@gmail.com

Carpenter and planter looking for farm work. HC license, elevated platform license, Boom license. Accommodation required for married couple. Ph. 0412 672 570.

Cane farming consultant. Willing to travel. 0468 996 433.

Ballina 13 19 578 576

Woongoolba 31 8 707 491

Eumundi 284 10 1054 709

Tewantin 212 30 942 689

Maryborough 216 3 544 494

Tewantin 211 30 942 689

Eumundi 284 10 1054 709

Nambour 261 13 1344 715

Woongoolba 31 8 707 491

Murwillumbah 46 11 789 641

Ballina 13 19 578 576

Woodburn 19 12 490 491

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Get the facts: New era for RD&E info meetings

2012 will be a watershed year for Australia’s sugar industry as the traditional research and development model is reformed to create a single, sustainable sugar research organisation with a larger research funding pool.

Information sessions for the entire Australian sugar industry have been planned by ASA, with the session times and venues presented below. Come along and find out more about what the new era for RD&E will mean for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 12 March</td>
<td>Mareeba</td>
<td>Mareeba Leagues Club</td>
<td>1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 13 March</td>
<td>Mossman</td>
<td>Port Douglas Community Hall</td>
<td>8.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 13 March</td>
<td>Gordonvale</td>
<td>Gordonvale RSL</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 14 March</td>
<td>Innisfail</td>
<td>Sugar Industry Heritage Centre</td>
<td>1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 15 March</td>
<td>Tully</td>
<td>Tully Mill Hall</td>
<td>1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 16 March</td>
<td>Ingham</td>
<td>Kelly Theatre</td>
<td>9.00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 19 March</td>
<td>Burdekin</td>
<td>Burdekin Theatre</td>
<td>1.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 20 March</td>
<td>Proserpine</td>
<td>Proserpine Entertainment Centre</td>
<td>1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 21 March</td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>Mackay Convention Centre</td>
<td>1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 22 March</td>
<td>Sarina</td>
<td>Sarina Bowls Club</td>
<td>9.00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 26 March</td>
<td>Bundaberg</td>
<td>Bundaberg TAFE theatre</td>
<td>1.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 27 March</td>
<td>Childers</td>
<td>Canegrowers Isis</td>
<td>8.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 27 March</td>
<td>Maryborough</td>
<td>Canegrowers Maryborough</td>
<td>2.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 28 March</td>
<td>Rocky Point</td>
<td>Woolgoolba Lutheran Hall</td>
<td>2.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 29 March</td>
<td>Ballina</td>
<td>Ballina RSL</td>
<td>9.00am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spotted anything unusual?

Nothing will protect your fields more than a good hard look.

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.

LOOK. BE ALERT. CALL AN EXPERT.