

2016 crush hits the halfway mark in Herbert, Burdekin & Mackay

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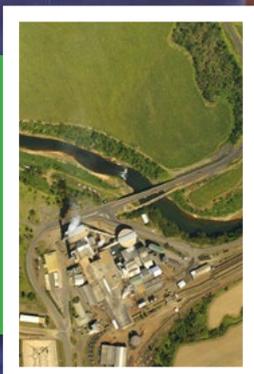
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Sweet step for grower choice

By Paul Schembri, Chairman CANEGROWERS

“MSF Sugar and its growers, through a straightforward approach and the right attitude, have made the amended Sugar Industry Act work.”

The recent finalisation of two agreements involving MSF Sugar, QSL and 450 growers is a substantial turning point in the marketing dispute that has dominated the Queensland sugar industry for more than two years.

More than anything else, the achievement of the Cane Supply and On-Supply agreements is about attitude and goodwill leading to successful outcomes.

MSF Sugar has shown the right attitude and, together with its suppliers, it has created a more certain future for itself and the growers. Certainty is everything.

Growers in the MSF Sugar areas now have three important things in place.

First, they know that their cane will be crushed in 2017 and in the years beyond.

Second, growers now enjoy a choice of marketing pathway giving them competitive returns to match their investment decisions. CANEGROWERS fought hard to secure this right for growers.

Third, the agreements ensure that growers can capture some of the high prices currently available and lock them in for future seasons.

While these agreements are important for MSF suppliers, their significance is also great for the rest of the industry.

Wilmar Sugar has been the most vocal critic of the Real Choice in Marketing legislation and has constantly claimed that it is unworkable and impractical.

Yet MSF Sugar and its growers, through a straightforward approach and the right attitude, have made the amended *Sugar Industry Act* work.

Wilmar's claims are now proven to lack credibility and the time for posturing is over. The company needs to accept that growers have a genuine claim that their GEI (grower economic interest) sugar is marketed on terms and conditions that suit them, not on ones that suit Wilmar.

Sugar tax

Recently, the issue of a sugar tax has raised its head in the public arena. I want to acknowledge the spirited dismissal of the tax by the Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce.

There are some people that believe that a sugar tax would do no harm to the sugar industry. This is nonsense.

As the Deputy Prime Minister put it recently, “..some people think you can start a fire in the curtains and not burn the whole house down.”

A sugar tax would be state-sanctioned censure of our industry. It would cause enormous reputational damage and undermine investment confidence.

It beggars belief that a sugar tax would dissipate the contemporary health issues of diabetes, heart disease and obesity. We do not dismiss the seriousness of these conditions but believe that targetting sugar, or any single product, will not address their complexity.

What is missing from this debate is facts. The amount of sugar we sell on the domestic market in Australia has been relatively static at around one million tonnes since the 1980s. Yet our population has increased by seven million!

CANEGROWERS and industry organisations will work tirelessly to end this debate. This tax would have serious consequences for us and we need to stamp it out now. ■





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NEWS IN BRIEF

Sugar price boosts confidence

Confidence among Australia's sugar producers has soared to a near six-year high on the back of the strength in sugar prices, according to a recent survey.

And global fundamentals remain supportive of prices being maintained with Rabobank's Sugar Quarterly report forecasting another sizeable global deficit.

With the 2015/16 season marking the first global sugar deficit in five years, at a projected 7.9 million tonnes, the report forecasts a similar deficit in the 2016/17 season of 7.2 million tonnes.

Rabobank commodity analyst **Georgia Twomey** said the likelihood of this substantial deficit in 2016/17 was already priced into the market, with prices up around 50% on last year's average.

"Following the dramatic run-up in prices earlier in the year, New York #11 futures have stabilised over the past three months to trade in a fairly narrow range of USc19/lb to USc21/lb," Ms Twomey said.

Ms Twomey said prices would be largely dictated by the size of the Indian, Thai and Centre/South Brazilian crop and, while some certainty around the size of their crop was months away, any downward revision would drive prices higher.

Ms Twomey said the Australian crop was expected to be in the vicinity of 36 million tonnes – the largest harvest since 2005.

"While growers are citing concerns around the impact of the wet on their CCS levels, this is largely outweighed by the price improvement, with market fundamentals remaining very supportive for the 2016/17 season," she said.

Ms Twomey believes the largest downside risk to the outlook is the large net-long position held by fund speculators.

"While their current trade position is making the sugar market vulnerable to macro-shocks, we believe any such downturn would be relatively short-lived given the positive outlook for prices," she said.

Smartcane BMP hits a new milestone

More than 10% of Queensland's cane production area is now managed by growers who have achieved accreditation in Smartcane BMP.

More than 1,420 growers have benchmarked their practices in the BMP program, and these growers represent 63% of the cane production area.

The best management practice program has two steps for growers:

- Benchmarking their practices through self-assessment.
- Accreditation of their BMP status through an independent on-farm audit of records and practices.

Most of the benchmarked growers are interested in becoming accredited but

may have records that are not complete for a whole season, or may need to modify a practice such as nutrient management.

Preparing for accreditation can therefore require an additional season so that the records are complete and show that practices are at the BMP standard.



This helps to explain why the accredited area is much lower than the benchmarked area.

However, it the accredited area that is increasing the fastest, as more growers acquire the necessary farm records and see the advantage of accreditation for their industry and their business.

It is anticipated that the area accredited will reach 100,000 ha during 2017, which will be 25% of the cane production area.

RECYCLING PROGRAM ON TRACK FOR BIG TARGET

Australia's sugarcane growers are on target to make this year's fertiliser bag recycling drive a 1,000 tonne event!

"Last year a trial recycling scheme for sugarcane fertiliser bags collected an amazing 82,333 bags representing 247 tonnes of packaging," CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan said.

"It exceeded expectations as growers embraced the opportunity to keep this plastic out of landfill sites.

"We welcome the news that Farm Waste Recovery has now made this scheme a permanent fixture in the cane growing industry.

"It demonstrates the commitment of our growers to the environment and means that this resource will be melted down and re-used."

The recycling program is backed by Incitec Pivot and Impact Fertilisers. Their retailers and resellers are collection points for fertiliser bags in all Queensland and New South Wales sugarcane regions. Many local government depots are also accepting bags.

Farm Waste Recovery CEO **Stephen Richards** said the 2015 trial proved to plastic processors that there was a valuable resource that they could access for products including bar stools, plastic pipes and outdoor furniture.

"From Mossman to Sarina last year we collected enough plastic to make 1,300 park benches," he said.

"Now we have expanded to all Queensland and New South Wales cane growing regions.

"This year our target is 1,000 tonnes meaning tidier farms and less rubbish in landfill.

"I'm excited by what this can achieve. The trial provided work for seven people so by making this an annual event, we can create permanent jobs in regional areas."

Farm Waste Recovery and CANEGROWERS acknowledge the support of the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection in the running of the trial and its evaluation.

For more details visit www.farmwasterecovery.com

BREAKTHROUGH AGREEMENTS lock in grower choice

CANEGROWERS members supplying MSF Sugar mills are the first in Queensland to be guaranteed choice in sugar marketing with two crucial agreements now signed, sealed and delivered.

A sugar sales agreement between MSF Sugar and QSL, the industry marketer, has been ratified.

It is the final piece of a new structure for MSF Sugar and growers who reached the historic first new Cane Supply Agreements (CSAs) in May under the *Sugar Industry (Real Choice in Marketing) Amendment Bill 2015* which sparked fierce debate.

"This is a ground-breaking step," CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri said. "It proves that the legislation passed by the Queensland Parliament in December 2015 is both workable and practical when approached with the right attitude."

"A lot of dire predictions were made during the debate on sugar marketing but, far from putting jobs in peril or stifling investment, the legislation has allowed MSF and growers to get on with business and invest with confidence.

"MSF Sugar has committed tens of millions of dollars to new green fuel plants and is investing in programs to assist growers with their productivity, profitability and sustainability. It's also had its own farms accredited in Smartcane BMP, the best practice program which will prove our industry's environmental credentials to sugar customers around the world."

The final step for grower choice in sugar marketing was the necessary ratification of a practical and sound On-Supply Agreement between MSF and QSL by three of QSL's milling shareholders, Bundaberg, Isis and Mackay.

Growers in the Maryborough, Cairns and Tableland districts who have signed new CSAs with MSF can now choose between a sugar marketing pathway offered by the miller and one offered by QSL.

"They can now secure pricing for 2017 with a marketer of their choice," Paul Schembri said. "It is a sweet step forward in the campaign we have waged against plans which would have forced growers supplying three of the biggest milling companies down a single, mill-owned marketing pathway."

"CANEGROWERS welcomes the confidence MSF is showing in our industry's long term future," he said.

"We now urge Wilmar Sugar and Tully Sugar to look closely at these landmark agreements. They prove that the legislation is workable and that commercial solutions can be found that benefit all sectors in the industry.

"The time for delays and frustrations is over – all of our members have the right to marketing choice and to face the future, and the 2017 season, with contracts in place."



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CANEGROWERS Regional round-up

By CANEGROWERS district offices

Mossman

The throughput for Week 16 was the highest since 2002, with 52,010 tonnes of cane processed at an average crushing rate of 346 tonnes/hr. This brings the total tonnes crushed to-date to 566,887 with a mill average of 11.38CCS.

Coastal CCS remains disappointingly low. Coastal growers have supplied 413,711 tonnes of cane for an average of 10.73CCS, while Mareeba growers have supplied 153,176 tonnes of cane for an average of 13.14CCS.

Mackay

Mackay Sugar's mills processed 241,682 tonnes for the week ending 2 October.

Racecourse Mill crushed 70,739 tonnes with evaporator issues causing most of the downtime. Farleigh processed 70,656 tonnes and Marian 97,288.

With over 50% of the crop through, Mackay Sugar says it will focus on maintaining crushing rates and availability. Total cane crushed to date is 2,836,680 tonnes with a PRS average of 12.54. PRS for this week was 13.28.

Plane Creek Mill crushed 70,974 tonnes in the week ending 1 October, the best week of the season so far. The mill has now processed a total of 659,619 tonnes.

Favourable conditions have allowed growers to maximise their tonnes harvested on a daily basis. Mill stops were also at the lowest in this week for the season. Plane Creek Mill area is now at just over 46% mark. CCS for the week was 13.24 units, with the season to date at 12.77

Burdekin

During week 17 (the week ending 1 October) Burdekin mills passed the 50% mark in crushing the revised estimate of 8.7 million tonnes of cane for 2016.

Mill cleaning and maintenance stops were carried out on all mills during the week and two extended breakdowns of eight hours at Kalamia and 10 hours at Inkerman will also impact the weekly throughput.

Storm rains, with up to 80 millimetres recorded in some parts, on the evening of 29 September will impact cane supply at all mills for the rest of the week and well into the following week.

At the time of writing this report there is also several thousand tonnes of burnt cane left standing in paddocks that will be monitored daily for availability for harvesting and suitability for milling.

Up to the end of week 16 there has been 4,204,869 tonnes crushed with a weekly CCS level of 14.58 with Q183 providing 31% of supply and the best performing variety for CCS at 14.99.

CCS has continued to rise and has been above budget over the last four weeks with season to date CCS now at 13.35.

Mills are reporting high dextran levels ranging between 300 to 500 ppm and have requested that growers and harvest contractors be encouraged to conduct smaller burns to assist in minimising stale cane and dextran levels going into the change to 1 1/2 day burns that is effective as of 1 October.

Dextran is also an issue for the mills to reach quality standard sugar. High dextran effects sugar crystal elongation and slows boiling.

Dextran is a waste product from bacteria which reduces sugar content.

Reasons for high dextra levels include:

- Delays from cut to crush and warm weather increase the amount of dextran.
- Cane age also has a contributing factor in dextran levels.
- Burning large amounts of cane is a concern, burning early to allow drying may be contributing where ground is still wet.

There is also dead cane at the bottom of some of the very large crops this year.

Proserpine

It has been another rain interrupted fortnight in Proserpine with 11 hours lost due to last Friday's downpour. Throughput up to that point was good.

Altogether, a little over 188,000 tonnes of cane was crush for the fortnight bringing the total for the season to 878,596 tonnes.

As the mill approaches the halfway mark of the crush, the CCS has remained much lower than expected. Last week's rain event saw the CCS retreat to 12.85 meaning the year to date average CCS remains steady at 12.58.

Despite a few short stops, mill availability remains good. Provided the rain holds-off, the 2016 crush remains on track to be completed by mid-December.

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Herbert River

Whilst there was generally favourable harvesting weather, the cleaning and maintenance stops required at both Victoria and Macknade mills coupled with a bearing failure at Victoria's B side contributed to a below forecast outcome for the week of 198,076 tonnes.

The season to date tally climbed to 2,321,159 tonnes being just over 50% of the estimated crop. CCS for the week was 12.54 bringing the season to date CCS to 11.87.

CCS improved in the drier conditions but still remains significantly below the revised estimated seasonal average for both pools.

Planting is continuing in areas that have previously been too wet. Germination in the warmer, longer days is generally excellent.

Whilst everything in the field has been delayed by the unusually wet winter everyone is praying for more favourable weather to allow the crop to be harvested before Christmas.

Three sugar ships arrived at Lucinda during the week to load a combined total of 125,000 tonnes of sugar.

QSL took the opportunity to showcase its role as terminal operator and hosted group tours, including the Herbert River Women in Sugar group and several Members of Parliament.



Tully

The crop continues to cut to estimate or above and we have past the halfway mark with 1.64 million tonnes crushed. CCS is climbing slowly and the season estimated CCS is now just over 12 almost a full unit less than last year.

The heavier cane is providing record weekly crushing rates, which is assisting the cause. A big effort from all concerned and a lot of luck with the weather is required for the balance of the season.

Bundaberg

Both Millaquin and Bingera mills performed extremely well during week 15 of the crush and a total of 97,259 tonnes were processed.

This is the highest throughput in one week at the two mills with the current number of boilers and we have passed the 1,000,000 tonnes mark

Throughput for the season so far is now at 1,026,152 tonnes which is approximately 60% of the crop estimate of 1.7 million tonnes.

The CCS at both mills continued to rise and reached a new season high of 14.29 for the district. The weekly average was 14.31 at Bingera and 14.28 at Millaquin.

Bundaberg Sugar and Bundaberg Canegrowers have agreed to increase the base CCS at both mills to 13.60 units. This means more money for growers and is good news as a payment adjustment has already been made.

The major variety this week was Q240A with 24% of supply and a CCS average of 14.32 units. CCS average for KQ228A (19% supply) was 14.75 units and Q208A (17% supply) was 14.42 units.

Isis

As of 30 September Isis Mill had processed 828,315 tonnes of the 1.3 Million tonnes of cane estimated for the 2016 Season.

In Week 13 64,818 tonnes of cane were processed delivering an average CCS of 13.99 units for the week with a grower in Alloway providing KQ228 1st Ratoon with an impressive CCS of 16.08 units.

In Week 14 63,962 tonnes of cane were processed delivering an average weekly CCS of 14.37 units with a Gin Gin grower's Autumn Plant Q208 delivering a substantial CCS of 16.33 units. The season average CCS reached 13.54 units.

Whilst KQ228 continues to produce good CCS, Q240 is now dominating supply.

Despite some early storms and scattered showers the warm spring weather is quickly drying out paddocks and improving harvest conditions in the region.

Maryborough

At the end of week 13, MSF's Maryborough mill has crushed 499,317 tonnes at CCS of 13.44.

Last week the mill crushed 47,644 tonnes at CCS of 14.32. Highest CCS for the week was 16.80 from a block of Q228 R3 from Bidwill.

Performance of major varieties – Q138 13.59, Q208 14.44, Q232 14.15, Q240 14.69 & Q242 13.82. Majority of the planting has now been completed.

Rocky Point

Rocky Point growers continue to send cane to Condong, NSW.

As at the end of week 10 (24/9/2016), a total of 13,199.82 has been transported to NSW at a season average CCS of 12.86.

The revised estimate for the 2016 season is 300,830 tonnes.

Growers are experiencing cash flow problems due to non-operation of the Rocky Point Sugar Mill and are looking forward to the mill starting around 14 October, as notified by the mill owner.

Planting in Rocky Point has largely been completed, with better than normal strikes due to the favourable weather conditions.

Money Matters

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WHAT WOMEN WANT (in superannuation)

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Unless we tackle the issue head-on, by 2030 the retirement income gap is still expected to be 39% with average balances projected to be \$262,000 for women and \$432,000 for men². That's a whopping \$170,000 more for blokes!

But don't worry, below are some simple things you can do to ensure this doesn't happen:

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Rolling all your funds together is an easy way of keeping track of your super and can help build your balance faster because multiple funds can mean more fees. To do this is to use our handy Search and Combine tool at austsafe.com.au/findmysuper.

Salary sacrifice

When you're working and have some spare cash, you get a hefty tax return or are earning an above average income, why not make a contribution from your before-tax salary? Chances are, you won't miss it and you can even save on tax. To do this, simply visit our grow your super section at austsafe.com.au.

Make a co-contributions

In some cases, the Australian Government will contribute to your super account on your behalf if you make voluntary after-tax contributions and meet eligibility criteria.

Encourage your partner to contribute

Most people don't know this, but your spouse can also help you save for retirement by making contributions on your behalf. If you're not earning an income, or if your salary is less than \$13,800, your spouse may also receive an 18% income tax offset for contributions up to \$3,000 per year. To do this, complete the Spouse contribution form at austsafe.com.au

¹Industry Super Australia: www.industrysuperaustralia.com/campaigns/closing-the-gender-superannuation-gap/#sthash.YQX4sM0N.dpuf

²Industry Super Australia: See more at: www.industrysuperaustralia.com/campaigns/closing-the-gender-superannuation-gap/#sthash.YQX4sM0N.dpuf

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SRA research cracks the mystery on **CHLOROTIC STREAK DISEASE**



Researchers at Sugar Research Australia (SRA) have made a major breakthrough in determining the cause of a sugarcane disease that has remained a mystery for 87 years.

Chlorotic Streak Disease (CSD) was first recognised in 1929, and since then there has been research effort from around the world to determine the cause of the disease, how it is spread, and how to manage it.

In a major breakthrough, SRA researchers Dr Kathy Braithwaite, Dr Chuong Ngo and Mr Barry Croft have recently used modern DNA technology and traditional pathology to identify a new type of organism that causes CSD, isolating a microscopic organism that is a type of protozoan.

CSD is a serious and widespread disease of sugarcane. In the worst cases, yield losses can be as much as 40% and it has been estimated to cause an annual loss to the sugarcane industry of \$8 million to \$10 million.

SRA already gives all of its varieties a rating for resistance to diseases, including CSD.

Because it is transmitted via water, its impact is worst in wet growing districts of the Australian industry.

SRA Biosecurity Manager, Mr Barry Croft, said it was an important discovery for the Australian sugarcane industry.

"Understanding the cause of a disease is crucial to developing control and management strategies for that disease," Mr Croft said.

"By SRA identifying the protozoan that causes CSD, we hope this leads to better management options and information,

which will lead to benefits for sugarcane growers and millers.

"For example, SRA already gives all of its varieties a rating for resistance to diseases, including CSD.

"That information is crucial for growers when they choose what variety to plant according to the conditions on their farm.

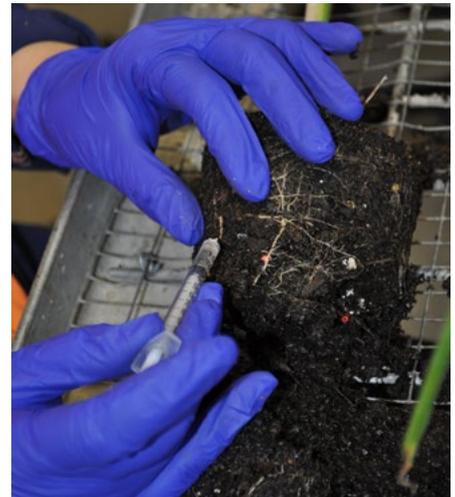
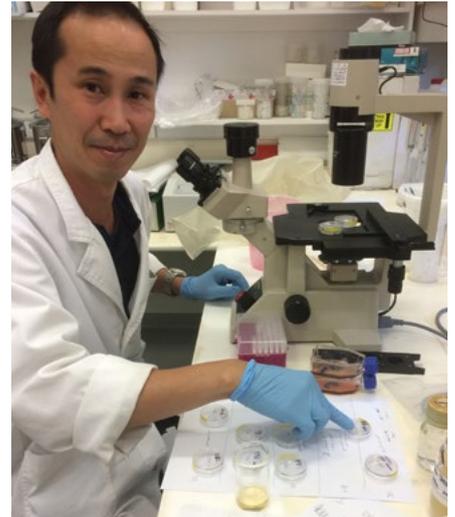
"The discovery of this organism has opened up more reliable ways to screen the varieties for resistance to CSD."

SRA has also developed a technique to diagnose whether sugarcane is infected with CSD, and is working with productivity service organisations to ensure this technique is useful and practical.

"Because CSD can spread so easily, proper use of a diagnostic test for CSD could reduce the spread of CSD via planting material, for example," said Mr Croft.

"Now that we know what the organism is, we also may be able to develop more targeted control methods." ▶





“Now that we know what the organism is, we also may be able to develop more targeted control methods.”

Sugarcane grower Mr Ray Zamora’s farms are in one of the highest rainfall areas of the Australian sugarcane industry at Tully, meaning he has faced significant yield losses from CSD in the past when there have been particularly wet years.

He welcomed the news that SRA researchers had discovered the organism that causes CSD.

“Managing CSD is something that I could change on my farm if there was improved information,” Mr Zamora said.

“If I had better resistance information for sugarcane varieties I could avoid planting susceptible varieties in the low lying parts of my farm, so this discovery is welcome news,” Mr Zamora said.

This research activity has been jointly funded by SRA and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. ■

Pictured (clockwise from top left): CSD symptoms sugarcane leaf; Dr Chuong Ngo working on CSD research at SRA Brisbane laboratory; Mr Barry Craft examining the CSD organism under magnification; CSD trials at SRA Woodford.

P10: (main picture) Chlorotic Streak symptoms inside sugarcane stalk; SRA Researcher Dr Kathy Braithwaite working on CSD trials at SRA Woodford.



By Greg Beashel
QSL CEO and Managing Director

“This marks an exciting new era for the Queensland sugar industry”

Marketing Choice arrives for MSF Sugar growers

QSL has finalised its On-Supply Agreement (OSA) with MSF Sugar, and as a result, growers supplying MSF Sugar mills now have access to QSL Marketing Choice arrangements for the 2017 Season and beyond.

This marks an exciting new era for the Queensland sugar industry and gives these growers more flexibility and control over the marketing and pricing options for their Grower Economic Interest in sugar (GEI Sugar) than ever before.

The Marketing Choice process for MSF Sugar growers is simple, with little change to existing systems. The key points to remember are:

- MSF Sugar growers still nominate their GEI Sugar Marketer, make their pricing nominations and receive payment in a similar way as they used to. They now just have more options to choose from.
- MSF Sugar growers can nominate their GEI Sugar Marketer for one or multiple years, however to access QSL forward pricing or multi-season pools their GEI Sugar Marketer nomination must cover the seasons concerned (i.e. to

forward price in the 2018 Season, you must also have a marketing nomination in place for that season).

- Those growers who have already made their GEI Sugar Marketer nomination for 2017 Season can still change this if the associated pricing has not yet been realised. They just need to fill out a new marketer nomination form.

MSF SUGAR GROWERS' QSL PRICING OPTIONS

The QSL pricing options now available to MSF Sugar growers for the 2017 Season include the existing pools growers may be familiar with, as well as new forward pricing products and features.

QSL-managed pool options for 2017 Season are:

- QSL 2017 Harvest Pool
- QSL 2017 Actively Managed Pool
- QSL 2017 Guaranteed Floor Pool
- QSL 2017 Forward Season Pool (Previously the 2-Season Forward Pool)

QSL's individual forward pricing options are:

- Fixed Price Forward Contract (6-lot/304.815 tonne minimum)
- Target Price Contract (10-tonne minimum)
- In-season Fixed Price Contract (new product with 6-lot/304.815 tonne minimum).





THE QSL ADVANTAGE

So why consider QSL? As an industry service organisation which returns all net value to the industry we serve, QSL is in a unique position to serve MSF Sugar growers and provides a strong alternative to your Miller.

We are highly respected in the international marketplace and have long-term relationships with high-value customers throughout Asia. With no corporate shareholders to support, we use our tax-free status to maximise returns to the growers and millers we serve.

Beyond these core qualities, our pricing and marketing teams have a strong track record of performance. Our 2015-Season results in comparison to your miller are detailed below:

2015 Season (including USQ Premium)	MSF Sugar	QSL
Committed In-Season Pools		
MSF Seasonal Pool	\$371	
QSL Actively Managed Pool		\$418
Guaranteed Floor Pool	\$374	\$411
Uncommitted In-Season Pools		
MSF Late Season Pool	\$407	
QSL Harvest Pool		\$386

All prices AUD/t IPS net. MSF Sugar data sourced from Grower Circular 15 July 2016. QSL prices as of 30 June 2016.

QSL's current pool performance is as follows and can be tracked on the QSL homepage at www.qsl.com.au:

2016 Season QSL-managed Pools	AUD/tonne Gross
Harvest Pool	\$549
Actively Managed Pool	\$577
Guaranteed Floor Pool	\$470
2-Season Forward Pool	\$477
3-Season Forward Pool	\$501

All prices indicative only as of 16 September 2016.

The QSL team is ready to be your Marketer and can process pricing requests from MSF Sugar growers upon confirmation of their GEI Sugar Marketer nominations.

These growers are reminded that while we are now accepting forward pricing orders, you have until late February 2017 to finalise your nominations to QSL's managed pools and can submit these at any time prior to this.

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

MSF Sugar growers can find information about QSL Marketing Choice and our pricing products in four ways.

1. WEBSITE

Details about QSL's 2017-Season pricing products (including the Pricing Pool Terms documents) and the Marketing Choice process in general are available on the QSL website at www.qsl.com.au.

Just click on the blue 2017 Marketing Choice icon on our homepage.

You should read the Pricing Pool Term documents and supporting information before committing to any QSL pricing product, as when you sign your Election Notification Form in your GPA, you will be explicitly acknowledging that you have read and understood the terms and conditions document for each of the Pools you decide to participate in.

2. GROWER HANDBOOK

MSF Sugar growers will receive a hard copy of our Grower Handbook in the near future, which features QSL pricing and marketing information in a single reference document.

3. INFORMATION SESSIONS

QSL will hold a series of local information sessions to help explain QSL's Marketing Choice options for the coming season.

For details, contact Carla Keith on 0409 372 305 or carla.keith@qsl.com.au

4. INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS/ QUERIES

Your QSL Industry Relationship Manager Carla Keith is available to answer any questions you may have.

You can contact her on 0409 372 305 or carla.keith@qsl.com.au

INNOVATION AND AUTOMATION IN THE BURDEKIN

By Amy Claireton

Burdekin grower Willy Lucas is well-known for his interest in testing new ideas and new technologies. A large project that has captured his attention for the past few years is an automation and telemetry trial for furrow irrigation that began with support through Project Catalyst.



Pictured: (above) Each irrigation valve has its own solar panel for the telemetry receiver and the hydraulic mechanism that slowly opens the butterfly valve, avoiding the creation of a water hammer in the fluming; (right) • Jade-AU mungbean variety is well-suited to the Burdekin environment, yielding up to 2 t/ha in just 70 days.



The trial established the feasibility of telemetry-controlled flood irrigation in sugarcane, however, although great progress has been made, final field testing and validation has not been completed due to funding limitations.

At the trial level the cost of the technology was the major driver for the project.

The key components, including automated valves, pump controllers and end of row sensors, along with the telemetry signaling system and the programmable software, has all been designed to suit cane farming systems and to achieve a price point per unit that is significantly less than commercial alternatives on the market.

Even if there is no yield benefit in installing and operating the automated system, Willy says the labour saving is at least 25% compared to conventional flood irrigation, and there is no need to check on irrigated paddocks at night.

"The system also provides improved control over the flow of water so I would also expect there to be tangible cost savings in water and or potential yield gains over time," he says.



Having investigated the costs of off-the-shelf automated flood irrigation systems, this on-farm trial took the team three years to set up and test.

"At around \$1000/ha, the systems on the market were too expensive for cane production and none were exactly suitable," Willy said.

"With Reef Rescue (Australian Government Reef Programme) funding through NQ Dry Tropics we set about building and testing three systems – end of row sensors, timers on irrigation valves and a combination 'set and forget' system."

The team included **Greg Payne** (Greg Payne Laser), **Peter McDonald** (Farmacist), **Alice Warner** (Farmacist) and Willy, with Greg providing much of the inspiration and impetus behind the project, while **Anthony Curro** (NQ Dry Tropics) assisted with the funding proposals.

"The software component of the system was expected to be the most challenging part of the technology package. Digibale, a software prototype company, developed the original software app in partnership with the

team and then Farmacist took the lead with the communication platform, investing significant resources to keep the project moving," Willy said.

"At the end of the project, the team had successfully established a low cost mesh network that allowed me to control irrigation infrastructure remotely, however the automation component has not yet been achieved."

The plan is to continue to develop software features including weekly scheduling, pump start-up logic and customisable priorities, automated cutoff for each pump when the sensors indicate the required irrigation level is reached, notifications, irrigation history for each block, water usage calculations and manual override controls.

"It was important to us that the automation didn't just turn components on and off – we also wanted to have notifications if the system identified any problems during irrigation so that they could be investigated as soon as possible," he says.

Setting up the trial site involved installing poly pipe and laser-levelling two 13 ha blocks, one to be automated

and one manually flood irrigated. The team also monitored water quality and water use efficiency in both blocks.

"The aim of the trial was to ensure each drill came through and that there was no irrigation runoff from either block," he says.

"This required me to check on the manual block three or four times each irrigation. I only needed to check the automated block once, and that was just to be satisfied that everything was working as planned. This represents a huge time saving and a real benefit to health and well-being on the farm."

Fifteen years ago Willy was applying irrigation water at a rate of 45 ML/ha in a fully cultivated cane system. After moving to a minimum tillage system he brought the irrigation rate back to about 15 ML/ha and says that the automated flood irrigation system has the potential to bring water consumption down to 8–10 ML/ha while maintaining productivity.

Continues page 16...

Pictured: Willy Lucas is pleased with the soil health benefits he can see as a result of crop rotation on their Burdekin delta farm.

"The other aim is to eliminate runoff from irrigation, which is known to transport nutrients off-farm," he says.

"We might not have control over rainfall events, but we can take control of irrigation runoff and keep the applied nutrients on the paddock for the crops."

There are 55 rows per set and there is one sensor per set placed at the end of the row for ease of access. The plan is to move the sensors up the row a little so that they can initiate shut down earlier and avoid any run-off at all.

The system uses the free to air RF network to send sensor information and control signals back to a base station located at the farm office, connected to a PC.

The system can be manually controlled from a web browser (no internet required) or controlled from the Farmacist website (FarmConnect).

On the website, the sensor layout and sensor status can be seen, which improves usability.

Both the automated and manually operated blocks yielded about 190 t/ha from cane varieties Q208 and Q240.

The system can be retro-fitted to existing flood irrigation systems with the pump controllers wired into the pumps and powered by solar panels if there is no mains power available at the pump site. The moisture sensors and the butterfly valves are also solar powered.

Willy says the system is suited to all soil types and that there is scope to program settings to allow effective surge irrigation.

Cropping choices

Willy and Johnellen Lucas are the fourth generation to farm the home block at Osborne near Home Hill and a nearby block, bringing the total area under cane to 186 ha.

Their son, Mark, has returned to work on the farm while daughter Michelle works off-farm. They are also involved in contract hauling and have owned a contract spraying business.

The Lucas' are convinced of the benefits of crop diversification and rotation and have grown navy beans, cotton, soybeans, sweet corn and mungbeans.



Single tine ripper with wavy discs is used when required to renovate blocks, however cultivation is kept to a bare minimum and the inter-row space is kept compact to allow for efficient irrigation in the high infiltration soils of the Burdekin delta.

Jade-AU mungbeans have performed well in recent years, taking only 70 days to yield up to 2 t/ha off about 23 ha.

They plan to sow 23 ha to mungbean and corn this spring/summer and will also be trying rice production in the future, which Willy thinks will perform well on their high infiltration blocks.

Willy has recently introduced an 18 month break from cane to grow other crops to achieve significant improvements in soil health and fertility along with a financial boost. He plans to grow mungbean followed by corn crops and back to mungbean or soybean, before returning to sugarcane.

"The fact is, that no other crop is really as well suited to the extreme weather events we have here," he says.

"Cane will always be the main crop for most farmers here but we also need to include other crops in our farming systems.

"I like to get involved with trials and to test new ideas on our own farm," says Willy. "Last year we tested the use of bio-fertiliser compared to conventional NPK fertiliser on a four ha block."

The biofertiliser takes four days to 'brew' and then matures for 30 days to make a long life liquid fertiliser. The

liquid fertiliser can then be added to the flood irrigation system and applied as often as required during the growing season.

Smartcane BMP

Willy says he's never been keen on paperwork but he does see the benefits of the Smartcane BMP program.

"Most of our farming practices met the requirements so the main change for us has been with the record-keeping," he says.

"We have adjusted the timing of our fertiliser applications to a slow release product applied after harvest or regular fertiliser applied after the first irrigation to minimise nutrient movement off the production area.

"We also added a shower to our chemical storage and mixing area."

"In the long term we think there will be benefits through the potential ability to market our sugar as Smartcane BMP certified through the mill, and or as a Bonsucro certification."

The Lucas farm is accredited in the three core Smartcane BMP modules. ■

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WORKPLACE ESSENTIALS

Workshops on managing employees in farm businesses

A series of free, half-day workshops are being held around Queensland to help agricultural businesses achieve Fair Work compliance, better manage employment risks, and adopt a best management approach.

A recent increase in funding and activity by the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) means that employers are more likely than ever to be inspected or audited.

Industry supports the targeted campaigns that will expose those who chose non-compliance.

Recent high profile prosecutions have resulted in large fines, enforceable undertakings, and unfavourable media exposure.

To help agriculture employers to do the right thing, a series of Workplace Essentials workshops are being held in major agricultural regions with an agriculture industrial relations specialist.

Queensland Farmers' Federation President, **Stuart Armitage** encouraged agribusiness employers and human resources personnel from all agriculture sectors to attend.

"By attending these workshops employers will have a much clearer understanding of where the gaps are in their policies and practices," he said.

"Importantly, they will also be provided with useful links to industry relevant best practice resources to help address those gaps and establish positive practices in the workplace."

Using a best management practice approach, workshop participants will:

- Get a better understanding of legal obligations under the *Fair Work Act*, National Employment Standards and relevant Award/s,
- Undertake a risk assessment activity to 'stress test' compliance with Fair Work requirements and identify where risks lie,
- Discuss and work through how to manage tricky issues such as poor performance/conduct, disputes, or termination of employment, and
- Learn how to deal with labour hire contractors and avoid claims against their business.

CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan said that it was vital that employers fully understand their obligations under the Fair Work laws so that they can do the right thing.

"There are a lot of regulations and responsibilities and there is sometimes confusion about what is needed to be compliant with workplace laws," he said.

"The vast majority of farmers want to ensure that they are compliant.

"These seminars are all about reducing industry vulnerability by keeping

farmers up to date and helping them to do the right thing."

To register for a seminar please register online at www.growcom.com.au/wes

Lockyer Valley – Wednesday 5 October

Mareeba – Wednesday 12 October

South Johnstone – Thursday 13 October

Bundaberg – Thursday 27 October

Bowen – Wednesday 9 November

Charters Towers – Friday 11 November

Gympie – Thursday 17 November

Glass House Mountains – Friday 18 November

Mackay – Wednesday 8 February 2017

Yeppoon – Tuesday 14 February 2017

Emerald – Wednesday 15 February 2017

St George – Wednesday 1 March 2017

Kingaroy – Wednesday 15 March 2017

QAWN and the Workplace Essentials workshops are industry led initiatives, funded by the Queensland Government as part of a suite of rural jobs and skills initiatives including the Queensland Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance and Agforce's School to Industry Partnerships Program.

Workplace Essentials Seminars 2016/17

Achieving Fair Work compliance and managing employment risks



Getting the lowdown on what to do with low-lying cane land

Do you have flood-prone, low-lying cane land that struggles to be productive? A new study is aiming to identify what alternatives might exist for making some income from it.

The issue of farming these areas came to light recently with a report commissioned by the Queensland Government, called Alluvium.

It looked at changes to sugarcane land use as one option to improving water quality for the Great Barrier Reef.

Alternative uses for cane land has been a sensitive topic and it's been felt there is a need for more information so that growers, the industry and government can assess both the opportunities and the risks in any strategy.

So, what land use options do cane farmers have that will provide an income and also reduce nitrogen from reaching the Great Barrier Reef?

James Cook University (JCU) and Griffith University scientists and economists are investigating this question.

Their scoping study will collate relevant information on options for low-lying cane land in the Wet Tropics region.

It will assess the costs and benefits of different land use options and identify income streams.

The study is being funded through the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme,

The lead researcher is Dr Nathan Waltham from JCU.

"We understand that this is a sensitive topic for the cane industry," he said.

"The implications of land use change on production, mill viability and regional communities are issues that have been raised by industry and this is forefront in the scoping study.

"Our study will provide a step by step process, backed by the best available information, that will help identify alternative income streams for low-lying land."

The study needs growers in the Wet Tropics region who may be interested in alternatives for their low lying land and would be willing to discuss their situation.

If this is you, and you're interested in being involved in the study please contact Dr

Waltham at Nathan.waltham@jcu.edu.au or phone 4781 4191.



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Irrigators Energy Savers Program

targets significant energy savings for a
Central Queensland sugar cane farm

PROPOSED SOLUTION 

Potential energy savings

16%

Key facts

Farm / Industry

Broadacre crops

Product

Sugar cane and macadamias

Location

Bundaberg

Irrigation

Travelling gun

Pumps

Centrifugal

Solution

Proposed:

Resolve pressure loss and install variable speed drive

Farm profile

The farm, near Bundaberg, produces sugar cane and macadamias, and draws water from the Burnett River to irrigate the crops.

Irrigation is via travelling gun irrigators with five discrete pumping stations to distribute and disperse water across the farm. The main irrigation period is from September to April when irrigation is mainly undertaken overnight and runs an average of 16 hours per day.

Current irrigation

The irrigation system comprises:

- Two submersible turbine pumps that draw water from the river to supply the high-pressure travelling gun irrigators. They are both powered by 93kW electric motors and one is fitted with a variable speed controller.
- A pump station that consists of two centrifugal pumps in series (a 15kW lift pump and a 55kW booster pump) that supply river water to the irrigation system.

Action

An energy audit of the pumping systems evaluated:

- installing variable speed controls
- replacement with more energy efficient drive units

- resolving pressure losses
- resizing pumps.

Results

Of the energy-saving opportunities evaluated, several initiatives were identified with savings up to 16% and a payback period of 1.3 years (approx). These initiatives include modifying existing pump pipework at one pump to reduce pressure losses, installing a variable speed drive to another and undertaking impellor modifications to a booster pump to better match duty requirements.

There are significant savings available (approx. \$11,000 per annum) by reviewing the tariff pricing structure for each pump installation.

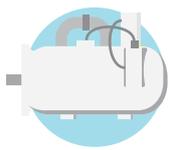
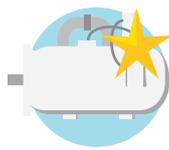
The Irrigators Energy Savers Program is funded by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries



Recommendations

The energy audit recommendations are summarised below:

Solution	  Replace motors and install variable speed drives on selected pumps
Est. energy savings (kWh/annum)	63,678
Est. operating cost saving	\$17,075
Est. cost to implement	\$22,148
Payback period (years)	1.3
Est. demand reduction (kW)	39
Est. energy savings	16%

Forecast savings in pump operating costs	 Existing system	 Upgraded system	 Reduction in operating costs
Annual pump operating cost	\$106,719	\$89,644	-
Cost to implement	-	\$22,148	-
Operating costs for first 2 years	\$213,438	\$201,436	\$12,002
Annual pump operating cost for years 3 to 10	\$106,719	\$89,644	\$17,075
Total pumping costs for 10 years	\$1,067,190	\$918,588	\$148,602

Farmer feedback

The total estimated capital cost to implement the recommendations has been an impediment to proceeding. The farm owner is sourcing quotes to assess the cost of staging the upgrade works. While the overall capital outlay was a barrier, the farmer acknowledged the business case was sound and that improvements needed to be implemented.



FASHIONS IN FOOD

over the past 50 years

By the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance Nutrition Team

Just like clothing trends, the food we eat has morphed over the years as culinary trends have risen and fallen.

The mid 1960s saw the introduction of the 'anti-cholesterol era. This was partly due to the association between high cholesterol levels and heart disease and it began the demonisation of fat.

This anti-cholesterol, anti-fat push led to several societal changes, including a move away from animal products such as red meat and eggs and an increase in processed food, particularly low-fat products.

"People thought, it's low-fat, that means it's healthy and I can eat a lot of it," says Lisa Renn, Accredited Practising Dietitian, who adds that our reliance on processed foods has continued to escalate.

"A study by Queensland University of Technology found that 58% of the Australian household food budget is now being spent on discretionary food and drinks and 14% on takeaway, which is a real problem," she says. "Not all processed food is bad but they are often higher in sugar, salt and fat and higher in energy but lower in fibre."

A rise in carbs

As red meat left dining tables, there was a resultant increase in carbohydrates such as pasta, also reflected in the rising popularity of Italian food.

The past five decades have seen the introduction of multicultural foods such as Italian, Middle Eastern and Asian cuisines. Dining out and takeaway food steadily gained popularity, with fast food outlets such as McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut launching from the late '60s.

Lisa says while multiculturalism has added an amazing dimension to our food supply by introducing new ways to eat a wider variety of foods, an increased reliance on eating out and takeaways has had an adverse impact.

"Restaurant and takeaway foods have a whole lot more calories in them than anything you would prepare at home. They're also likely to be higher in saturated fats and salt, which impacts on things like cholesterol levels, blood pressure and weight."

Fad diets

Another huge trend of the past 50 years has been fad diets, many of which have risen and fallen in popularity, from The Atkins diet, the Zone and South Beach Diet, right up to today's popular movements such as Paleo and the Raw Food Diet.

"What we know about diets is that they don't work," says Lisa. "Dieting is a predictor of future weight gain and that two-thirds of people who go on a diet will put their weight back on and more so. Dieting sets up an unhealthy relationship with food and stops people making good decisions about food because they've forced themselves into a regimen that is not sustainable."

Lisa says these diets can have healthy elements.

"But when they encourage people to not eat a particular food group known to be nutritious, such as grains or legumes, it's not healthy because you're falling short in major nutrients."

Lisa also highlights the current gluten-free craze.

"There's absolutely no need to be on a gluten-free diet unless you've been diagnosed with coeliac disease or are gluten intolerant and have gut issues," she says.

It is fair to say that the proliferation of dietary information has created immense confusion.

"People have no idea what is healthy eating anymore, because there is so much conflicting advice out there,"



says Lisa, adding there has been an increase in issues such as orthorexia, an obsession with eating healthily.

"I'm seeing people who cannot concentrate on their relationships because they're thinking about food ... it's creating unhappy and unhealthy people."

Lisa stresses the importance of developing a healthy relationship with food where we plan to eat well most of the time, but not all the time.

"Food is there to be enjoyed, to keep us healthy; it's a part of social gatherings and life. We need to balance our competing desires of 'I want to eat this because I like it' and 'I want to be healthy'," she says, adding the best way we can do this is to stop banning food.

"If you ban something, you're just going to want it more. If you want some cake and haven't had some in a while, then have some! Take away that restriction.

"At special occasions, enjoy the foods you enjoy. Just remember, special occasions aren't special occasions if they're occurring every day."

References

Lee AJ, et al. *Testing the price and affordability of healthy and current (unhealthy) diets and the potential impacts of policy change in Australia.* BMC Pub Health. 2016 16:315. DOI: 10.1186/s12889-016-2996-y

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Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)		Year to date	Average rainfall (mm)
	7 days to 9am	03.10.16		Jan-Oct
Mossman	5	13	1507	1897
Mareeba AP	0	6	413	751
Cairns	0.4	43	1151	1729
Mt Sophia	0	27	2085	2894
Babinda	0	0	2844	3753
Innisfail	10	3	2782	3135
Tully	0	1	2984	3647
Cardwell	4	60	1837	1807
Lucinda	0	0	1815	1831
Ingham	0	4	1691	1717
Abergowrie	0	0	1133	1561
Townsville	0.4	2	947	933
Ayr DPI	0	19	527	780
Proserpine	1	15	1269	1136
Mirani	0.2	0	1272	1252
Mackay	0.2	0	1454	1293
Sarina (Plane Ck)	0.2	4	1624	1423
Bundaberg	15	12	762	795
Childers South	4	11	738	687
Maryborough	1	10	722	940
Tewantin	1	3	954	1425
Eumundi	2	19	909	1383
Nambour	3	10	916	1376
Woongoolba	8	0	447	1088
Murwillumbah	3	0.2	1253	1284
Ballina	4	0	1111	1510
Woodburn	8	0	720	1161



The industry super fund for rural and regional Australia.

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

Toft 8 tonne side tipper track buggy, POA.
Ph: 0456 041 428

Mackay – Proserpine

12T SELF-PROPELLED 6x6 elev infielder VGC. 6t side/tipper on Leyland tandem GC. Don Mizzi 741 model on Fiat 750 special turbo plus MF102 half-tracks to suit. Mason 9550 4-row precision vacuum seed planter GC. 0438 606 578 (Mackay)

Bonel trash incorporator fertiliser box, plastic bins, stainless steel worms, VGC. Ph:0417 617 084

Rotary hoe breviglieri B250 3meters near new with crumble roller. Property sold. \$17,000 ono. Ph: 0428 091 437

Toft 6500 full track cane harvester, good condition \$60,000 Ph 4959 1071

One Gessner stool splitter fertiliser box, stainless bins in good order, adjustable row width \$14,000 plus GST; One two-wheel fertiliser box to tow behind quad bike, good condition, \$1,000 plus GST; One bag lifter on wheels \$1,000 plus GST Phone 0427 188 079

Valtra 6400 4WD tractor - 100HP, air-con cab, 2004 model, 3700 hours, good condition. \$30,000 (inc gst) ONO. Ph: 0418 710 958 / 4950 3048

4 Tonne Farview rear tipper, in working condition, \$500. Ph: 0426 263 615

Bundaberg - Rocky Point

DROP-DECK, tautliner and flat top extendable for hire. 07 4159 8174 or 0417 004 717.

Michelin Agribab radial tyres on rims to suit Massey Ferguson. Rear 18.4/34, 90% tread. Front 14.9/24 on rims, 90% tread. \$3500 inc gst. Ph: 0407 699 779

2 X Single Bin Billet Planting Trailers. \$2400 each, inc GST. Ph: 0428 212 792 - Maryborough

BackBlade Berends. 8 Ft. Hydraulic. \$2200.00 + Gst. Ph Jeff 0428 212 792 Maryborough

Wanted

TRACTOR TYRES of all sizes. 0418 775 698 all hours.

Wanted old ford 7700 tractor or similar. Ph: 0408 417 426

Wanted to buy a Komatsu SD6125 engine 325hp out of a cane harvester suitable to rebuild. Phone 0419 710 280

Positions Vacant

OAKENDEN - Contractor wanted to harvest and plant small cane farm. Flat farm, close cart. 07 4958 5224 or 0428 575 787.

CARMILA AREA - Haulout operator required 2016 season. Ph: 0407 701 298

Work Wanted

BURDEKIN AREA - Dozer truck driver seeking casual work. Have MC truck license. larry16858@gmail.com

INGHAM REGION - Looking for haulout work in Ingham or surrounding areas. Willing to travel. 0420434977

Property

INGHAM: Cane Farm for sale. Hawkins Creek. Total area 48.3ha. CPA 46.6ha. Shed, Electricity and water. Genuine enquiries Ph. 0407 635 175.

OAKENDEN: Cane farm or sale. Irrigated, flat, no rocks, good soil, close siding for carting, close to town. Call 07 4958 5224 or 0428 575 787.

MACKAY: 1750 Acres, seven lots, Coastal flat freehold property. South of Mackay supplying Mackay Sugar. High rainfall area and endless potential for diversification. House and garage, equipped irrigation system, shed, machinery and equipment. Ph: 0407 157 792

MACKAY: 422 hectares, cattle and cane. Huge supply of water, absolutely drought-proof property, 120 mega-litre water license, right on the coast. Ph: 0407 157 792

HERBERT RIVER: Cane farm 60.73ha with machinery and 4 bedroom dwelling at 194 Lannercost Ext Rd, Ingham Ph. 40454321

WALKERSTON AREA: Cane farm for sale, fully irrigated, 42.5ha cane 3.6ha grazing Ph: 0418 185 663

Wanting to lease cane farm, any size, from Mirani/Dows Creek area. Ph: 0411 811 768

BUNDABERG AREA: Wanted to lease cane farm. Phone 0429 026 690



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Driven by growers. Used by growers. Owned by growers

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

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

Smartcane BMP will help Australia maintain its competitive edge in the increasingly competitive world market. Being able to show we are productive and sustainable producers of quality sugar is becoming increasingly important to our customers, and the Smartcane BMP system is the way we are going to show just that.



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