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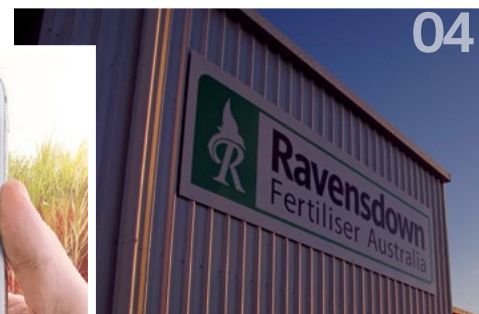
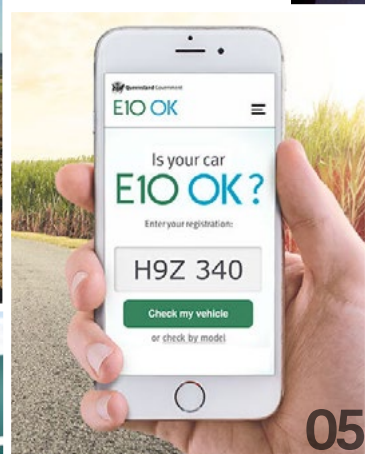
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Cover picture: Mareeba grower Fred Ciranni is impressed with the performance of his new variable rate irrigation system. Pictured with his beloved dog, Turbo.

Editor : Wayne Griffin

Design, subscriptions and classifieds:
Jacqui Segond

Articles appearing in *Australian Canegrower* do not necessarily represent the policies or views of CANEGROWERS

Published every second Monday by
CANEGROWERS

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AUSTRALIAN CANEGROWER ISSN 157-3039
Volume 38 Number 21
Printed by Screen Offset Printing
202 Robinson Road, Geebung, QLD, 4034

Subscriptions

Yearly subscriptions for 25 issues (postage included)

Within Australia	\$140 inc GST
Overseas (AUD)	\$220

The power and the passion

By Dan Galligan, CEO CANEGROWERS

Like a ripple in a pond after a rock has been thrown into it, our industry continues to feel the flow on effects of the huge injection of foreign investment it has seen over the past decade.

It is such a common question: at least once a week I am asked, "So, is foreign investment a good or bad thing for cane farmers?"

I know those asking want a simple yes or no answer to what they believe is a simple question.

Any rational assessment of the situation would end in a 'yes' answer because in reality any business or industry needs capital to drive growth, and capital means investment.

So investment is good. But is investment from foreign sources or overseas-owned companies also good?

As so often is the case, this is actually a hypothetical question because the depressing reality for Australian agriculture is that often the only sizeable injection of new capital comes from foreign corporations.

I, like many Australians, would love to see more investment in agriculture that started from us investing in ourselves - Australian investors backing Australian industries.

After all, if multinationals based in the United States or United Kingdom or China or Thailand or Singapore can determine that investing in Australian agriculture is a good move, why do we struggle to make the same argument to our own investors?

There really is no point in the foreign investment debate, other than it being popular.

As farmers, our members are already investing, boots and all, dollars and sweat invested in your industry.

I believe what we all want is to know that we can trust, rely upon and understand our investment partners. This goes for anyone we are in business with, but clearly none more so than with milling companies.

Having a clear line of sight to who is in control, to be able to understand their motivations, strategies and intentions and, of course, communicate to them our concerns, uncertainties and likewise strategies and intentions is really important.

We tried to do this recently in writing to the Wilmar Sugar leadership in Singapore to

seek a meeting with growers. The request was rejected.

This, to me, is the point that the expanding ripples in our pond have reached. The different approaches, cultures and motivations of each of the investors in this industry are coming into play.

This week, as Wilmar executes the next stage of its plans for the industry and takes hold of two seats on the five-person Sugar Terminals Limited Board, there is one word that constantly resonates for me. Control. It all seems to come down to control.

While the negotiations on cane supply agreements continue between our grower collectives and Wilmar and Tully Sugar, they are resolved with the rest of the milling companies.

The issues across each area are not the same, nor are the relationships, so clearly there are different outcomes.

For this reason, our structure of using local growers to be in the box seat of handling these negotiations is so powerful and so very important.

If members want to know who controls CANEGROWERS' strategy on cane supply agreements, it is clear, it is other local growers. Our strategy is not hidden, it is to work together. Your representatives are accessible open and available.

Meanwhile, the big board room plays will occur, but as grower representatives we will continue to try to understand the issues and influence the outcomes, but most importantly stand up for growers' rights. ■



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NEWS IN BRIEF

RFA payments in bank accounts

Growers who held redeemable preference shares in Ravensdown Fertiliser Australia (RFA) should have now received the payments that CANEGROWERS fought for in the wake of the company's exit from the Australian market.

RFA was set up in 2009 when the sugar industry invited the New Zealand co-operative to start supplying Queensland growers.

To facilitate this, the industry established a joint venture cooperative with the company.

CANEGROWERS estimates that in four years of operation RFA delivered \$20 million a year in cost savings to farmers and injected some needed competition into the fertiliser market.

However, in a move that shocked its customers and supporters, Ravensdown decided in May 2014 to wind up its Australian operations, one year short of its original agreement.

CANEGROWERS said at the time the decision was premature and sales could have hit the 100,000 tonne target for profitability if the agreement had run its course.

Since the announcement, CANEGROWERS worked to protect the interests of redeemable preference shareholders and negotiate a satisfactory settlement to their claims.

At a general meeting of shareholders in July this year, a resolution to accept a \$0.447 payout on held shares was passed by 99% of shareholders.

While this was clearly not a payment to the full dollar that many shareholders and CANEGROWERS would have preferred, this negotiated settlement was far in advance of what may have been achieved from a protracted and expensive legal battle that would have had an uncertain outcome.

This uncertainty, combined with the judgement that the positive intervention in the market and the considerable rebates growers received while participating in the scheme had already benefitted the industry, lead CANEGROWERS to negotiating and promoting the settlement for shareholder's consideration.

Ravensdown has now made payments to shareholders. ■

TRADE NEWS - CHINA

CANEGROWERS, through the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance and in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is working to defend Australia's interests and access to the Chinese sugar market.

Responding local Chinese sugar industry concerns about the rapid growth in sugar imports between 2011 and 2016, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) has begun an investigation into sugar imports into China.

China's production has not kept pace with its growing consumption of sugar. In 2015 Australia supplied 354,000 tonnes of sugar to China which was 7.3% of its imports.

Australia is seeking to understand China's concerns and be registered as an interested party in the action, along with other sugar exporting nations including Brazil and Thailand.

BANANA GROWERS URGED TO BOOK DISEASE CHECK

Biosecurity Queensland surveillance teams will visit banana growing properties in the Tablelands region next month to check for signs of Panama disease tropical race 4.

Panama TR4 Program Leader, **Rebecca Sapuppo** said the surveillance program now covers all commercial banana properties in Far North Queensland.

"This financial year, the Panama TR4 Program aims to survey any commercial banana farms in Tully, Innisfail, Lakeland and the Tablelands that we have not yet visited," she said.

Previously surveillance was conducted only on properties that had some link to the affected property in Tully.

"The disease has not been detected anywhere other than the infested property in Tully. As we can't be sure how the disease entered Queensland, surveillance has now extended to all commercial banana farms in the region. This is to further safeguard the industry against Panama disease tropical race 4," Ms Sapuppo said.

Growers are urged to schedule their surveillance visit by phoning 13 25 23.





Is your car **E10 OK?**

A new Queensland Government **E10 OK** biofuels consumer education campaign has been launched to help Queensland drivers better understand their fuel options and encourage them to take another look at using E10 ethanol-blended fuel.

In the campaign, E10 ambassador and motor racing identity **Mark Winterbottom** explains the benefits of biofuels and encourages motorists to consider using it.

More car engines are now built to run on E10 and the fuel is subject to

strict national fuel quality standards. The ethanol in E10 fuel is a renewable resource made in Queensland. So filling up with E10, is a great way to boost the industry and economy.

An online tool allows Queensland drivers to simply check their car's compatibility by entering their vehicle registration or make/model/year. The website also shows which fuel outlets stock E10 fuel. To check your vehicle visit www.qld.gov.au/e10ok.

The education campaign supports the Queensland fuel industry efforts to increase ethanol sales under the biofuels mandate which commences on 1 January 2017. Further information on the biofuels mandate is available at www.dews.qld.gov.au ■

STL AGM FACES GROWER QUESTIONS

This year's Sugar Terminals Limited (STL) annual general meeting attracted more than its usual share of attention from concerned growers.

One board seat, allocated to M class (miller) shareholders, is up for re-appointment and Wilmar has nominated a candidate.

As Wilmar owns more than 50% of miller shares and only miller shareholders can vote, it appeared certain the company would secure the seat giving it two people on the five-member board.

In the lead up to the AGM, serious concerns were being voiced by CANEGROWERS around the future of QSL as sugar terminal operator and STL's pricing structure, which currently is calculated on an equitable cost basis.

Wilmar has publicly questioned QSL's role as terminal operator and growers had questions prepared to put to the AGM around a potential conflict of interest for the board.

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CANEGROWERS Regional round-up

By CANEGROWERS district offices

Mossman

Week 18 saw throughput reduced to 34,525 tonnes of cane. This was due to heavy rain across the district.

The factory closed down for two days during which time various maintenance jobs were undertaken.

At the end of Week 18 (8 Oct) Mossman Mill had processed a total of 648,893 tonnes of cane for a mill average of 11.45 CCS.

Coastal growers have supplied 478,501 tonnes of cane for an average of 10.81 CCS, while Mareeba growers have supplied 170,392 tonnes of cane for an average of 13.27 CCS.

Cairns

Grower members across the Cairns region are finally able to initiate forward pricing with their choice of marketer.

Cane Supply Contracts and Grower Pricing Agreements have been finalised across both the Gordonvale and Babinda areas.

Wet weather and season length continue to be concerning to the grower group.

Tully

Harvest and crushing rates have taken advantage of a period of dry conditions and now just over 60% of the estimate has been completed. CCS is disappointing and is not likely to rise significantly for the balance of the crop.

Suckering and damage from rats is significant and will become more of a problem as the weather warms up. SRA undertook some harvest trials recently, looking at performance over a range of ground and fan speeds. The results of the trials are yet to be made available.

Innisfail

Wet weather has again interrupted harvesting with more than 60mm of rain over most of the region resulting in another 36 hours of lost crushing time during the week ending 16 October. This took the total lost harvesting time for the season to 602 hours.

Following a major breakdown at the mill on 20 September, which resulted in 64 hours lost crushing time, crushing operations were eased back slowly to ensure that the repairs had been carried out securely. Had the repairs not been able to be carried out it could have meant a significant delay to operations.

The crop continues to cut-out at 108% above pre-season estimate, with a

crop of 1,770,000 holding. Due to the amount of lost time experienced this year, the crush is now expected to be completed close to or just after Christmas.

There has been another downward adjustment of the Cane Payment CCS from 11.50 to 11.20. Season to date CCS at the week ending 16 October was only 11.10.

Growers are taking advantage of the ability to choose who markets their GEI sugar, with support for QSL remaining strong. Many have also taken advantage of pricing options for 2017. This has only been possible by the willingness of MSF Sugar to work towards Grower Choice.

Herbert River

Harvest and crushing was thrown into turmoil on Saturday 15 October, with heavy rain delivering falls of up to 120mm in the wetter parts of the district around Hawkins Creek and Lannercost. The rain also put paid to the main body of this season's planting operations, which had been winding down just prior to Saturday.

Hopes for a better than forecast Week 17 result were dashed, with Saturday's loading coming in at about 13,000 tonnes to bring the weekly total to just over 200,000 tonnes. This brought the season to date tally to just 60% of the current estimate of 4.6 million tonnes.

CCS continues its disappointing pattern. The estimated seasonal average has been downgraded by 0.3 units for both relative payment pools to 12.34 and 11.84 respectively for pools A and B, with the adjustment coinciding with the delivery advance on 20 October 2016.

The big issue for the Herbert remains the resolution of a Collective Cane Supply Agreement with Wilmar to implement Grower Choice. The recent release of estimated pool values for

QSL and Wilmar on 10 October has reinforced why growers need QSL and why QSL is worth fighting for.

For two consecutive years QSL is showing how it delivers value to growers and the industry through management of its Actively Managed Pool, whilst managing the bulk sugar terminals efficiently and effectively with a maintenance regime that ensures the terminal assets are here for the long term.

For the 2015 season, QSL's Actively Managed Pool achieved a final value of \$412.93 per tonne IPS compared with \$382.85 per tonne IPS for the Wilmar Managed Pool. For the 2016 season, as at 10 October 2016, QSL's Actively Managed Pool is estimated at \$579.97 per tonne IPS, whilst Wilmar's Managed Pool is estimated at \$475.33 per tonne IPS. The difference is worth some \$9.36 per tonne in cane value.

Negotiations are virtually at a standstill, awaiting an on-supply agreement between Wilmar and QSL. It's an impasse that Herbert River growers are very keen to see confronted and resolved.

Burdekin

Rain is presenting a recurring challenge to this year's harvest, with downpours every two or three weeks. The Burdekin was again impacted by rain on Thursday and Friday (13-14 October) that caused disruption to harvesting over the weekend.

An average of 18 hours crushing was lost at all mills on Saturday due to the wet weather. As a result all mill sites brought forward the cleaning stops that were planned for the following week.

At the completion of Week 19 (ending 15 October) the Burdekin mills had crushed a total of 5.26 million tonnes of cane, which is about 60% of the forecast crop.

Weekly CCS levels are still going up and above budget with 14.76 recorded for Week 19 for a season to date average of 13.61.

Best performing variety is still Q183, with 38% of supply and 15.27 CCS in Week 19.



Proserpine

Proserpine Mill passed the one million tonnes crushed milestone last week and is now approaching 60% completion of the revised 2016 crop estimate.

Some 178,000 tonnes were crushed over the past fortnight, although last week's throughput was down due to a scheduled maintenance day and storms later in the week.

While the storm activity impacted most of the district, falls of up 60mm in the southern areas necessitated some hasty machinery movement in search of dry ground.

CCS is climbing slowly with averages of 13.0 recorded on three days last week (ending 15 Oct).

Wet conditions towards the end of the week caused the weekly average to drop back to 12.96.

Season to date average CCS now stands at 12.63, which is more than a unit and a half below the same time last year.

The Operations Review Committee met and agreed to reduce the interim payment CCS to 13.00, which will be reflected in the October advance adjustment.

Unfortunately, further storms have been forecast, which will undoubtedly limit any CCS improvement in the short term.

Mackay

Throughput was hampered at Mackay Sugar mills by a number of failures/repairs. The three mills processed a combined total of 234,246 tonnes, bringing the season to date total to 3,320,333 tonnes of the 5.6m/t crop. PRS was 13.53 for the week, with the season average at 12.67.

Processing stalled due the failure of the feedwater valve shaft on No 1 boiler and the replacement of B1 mill delivery roller at Marian Mill. Individual mill tonnages for the week ending 18 October were: Farleigh 80,234, Marian 87,300 and Racecourse 66,712 tonnes.

Plane Creek

A total of 64,310 tonnes of cane was processed at Plane Creek Mill in the week ending 15 October (Week 18) bringing the season to date total to 778,767 tonnes (56%).

While there were no weather-related disruptions, a bin derailment and a bagasse conveyor choke caused significant stoppages.

CCS for the week was 13.36, with the average season to date of 12.84 units.

Average bin weights have returned to around the 3.80 mark which is indicative of drier harvesting conditions.

Bundaberg

Breakdowns at both mills resulted in more than 24 hours lost crushing time during Week 17. Bingera had a leaking boiler tube early in the week, while Millaquin had issues with a bagasse belt. Some rain that fell across the district late last month and early this month also contributed to reduced weekly crushed figures. In saying that, the region achieved excellent throughput in mid-September with both mills having very little lost time.

Bundaberg Sugar crushed a total of 76,055 tonnes during week 17, bringing the season total so far to 1,171,288 tonnes.

CCS continues to rise at both mills. Millaquin is at 14.40 and Bingera at 14.51.

Failing any further breakdown or adverse weather, Millaquin should finish crushing in late November, with Bingera following in the first week in December.

The base CCS was lifted in mid-September from 13.30 to 13.60 and we will review this again in the coming week.

The four major varieties were Q240A (19.0% of supply and average CCS of 14.64), followed by KQ228A (17.9% / 14.87 CCS), Q242A (17.1% / 13.66 CCS) and Q238A (13.6% / 14.28 CCS). Q208A did not make the top four varieties supplied during the week but was the next most supplied variety with 12.6% of supply and a CCS average of 14.79 units.

CANEGROWERS Regional round-up

Isis

As of the 14 October, Isis Mill had processed 949,964 tonnes of the 1.3 million tonnes of cane estimated for the 2016 season. With the million tonne mark expected to be crossed in Week 17, the crush remains on target to finish by 25 November.

In Week 15, 61,112 tonnes of cane were crushed delivering an average CCS of 14.43 units for the week, with a grower from Wallaville providing Q240 1st ratoon with a notable CCS of 16.41 units.

In Week 16, 60,537 tonnes of cane were processed delivering an average weekly CCS of 14.71 units.

A Bullyard grower's Spring plant Q240 delivered an outstanding CCS of 16.75 units.

At the close of Week 15 the season average CCS reached 13.60 units, by close of week 16 the season average CCS had climbed up to 13.67 units.

Q240 has taken the lead in CCS, however KQ228, Q208 and Q245 continue to deliver healthy results with CCS averages ranging between 13.68 and 16.27 units.

With just 350,034 tonnes left to process, growers are hoping the warm dry spring weather holds out.

Maryborough

As at 17 October, MSF's Maryborough Mill had crushed 602,095 tonnes at CCS of 13.66. The previous week the mill crushed 47,345 tonnes at CCS of 14.82. Highest CCS for the week was 17.10 from three farms at Bidwill, Granville and Scotchby Pocket.

Performance of major varieties for the week was as follows: Q138 - 13.63 CCS, Q208 - 15.03 CCS, Q232 - 14.83 CCS, Q240 - 15.31 CCS and Q242 - 13.69 CCS. The mill is still on target to complete crushing by mid-November.

Rocky Point

Rocky Point cane continues to be transported to Condong Mill in NSW for crushing. We estimate that at least 18,000 tonnes of cane had been crushed at Condong by 15 October.

Rocky Point Mill is making preparations to commence crushing in late October, pending the finalisation of the co-generation plant repairs.

Our experience is that these dates keep getting pushed out, but we remain hopeful. With an estimate of 301,829 tonnes at Rocky Point, we are hoping the weather is kind enough, and the mill reliable enough, to enable at least half of the estimate to get crushed this year.

Growers would like some rain to ensure a good strike of our plant cane. ■

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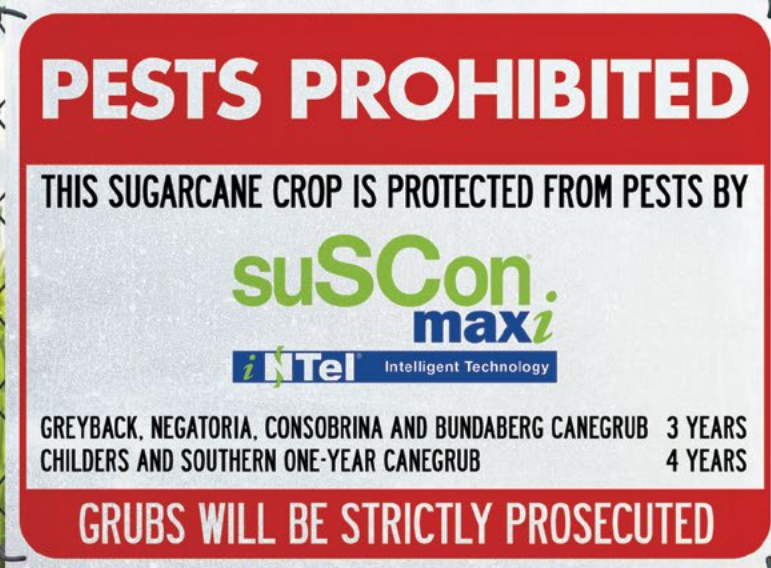
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It's important to give back to these industries and communities, that's why we support Variety, the children's charity. Variety empowers Australian children who are sick, disadvantaged or have special needs to live, laugh and learn by giving practical equipment and programs. We've recently undertaken a commitment to raise funds through the Variety Bash – Dusty Swags to Chequered Flags. Donations can be made here: <https://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/Austsafesupervarietybash16>

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Dr Andrew Ward to lead SRA BIOSECURITY

SRA has announced the appointment of Dr **Andrew Ward** to lead the organisation's Biosecurity division after an extensive and transparent recruitment process.

Dr Ward who was previously SRA's Leader, Plant Health, has significant experience in diverse agricultural industries, including sugarcane.

SRA CEO Mr **Neil Fisher** said that Dr Ward was an experienced scientist in Queensland, NSW, the Northern Territory, and internationally, and that he was ideally placed to lead this critical focus area for SRA research investment.

"The Australian sugar industry has placed plant biosecurity as one of its top priorities for investment from SRA," Mr Fisher said.

"Diseases, pests and weeds represent a significant threat to the ongoing viable production of Australian sugarcane.

"SRA's research investment into biosecurity is the frontline of protecting the industry from external threats that exist in foreign industries, including our northern neighbouring countries. SRA also plays a vital role in researching and managing the threats that already exist within the Australian sugarcane industry," Mr Fisher said.

Mr Fisher said the role of Focus Area Leader - Pest, Disease and Weed Manager involved close cooperation with State and Federal governments, and it also collaborates very closely with other SRA research activities including plant breeding, farming systems and production management, and soil health and nutrient management.

Dr Ward has also recently helped guide important research activities including preparation for exotic threats such as moth borers, as well as existing Australian pests such as cane grubs and soldier fly.



Dr Andrew Ward.

"The Australian sugar industry has placed plant biosecurity as one of its top priorities for investment from SRA,"

"Dr Ward will continue to manage these research activities with SRA's experienced team of researchers," Mr Fisher said.

Dr Ward said he looked forward to leading SRA's biosecurity activities for the industry.

"Biosecurity risks can cause hundreds of millions of damage to agricultural industries.

For the Australian sugarcane industry, SRA's research programs through biosecurity, and its linkages with other research, is critical to ensuring the ongoing success of the Australian sugarcane industry," Dr Ward said.

Milling statistics on the SRA website

SRA is now publishing some sugarcane harvest (milling) statistics on its website, with the permission of Australian sugar mills.

These statistics were previously available in a publication called the Australian Sugar Year Book, which is no longer published.

The mill statistics are available from the SRA website www.sugarresearch.com.au/page/Growing_cane/Milling/

Further information on milling statistics is also available from the Australian Sugar Milling Council website, www.asmc.com.au

Harvest Research Management Group keen to improve harvest efficiency

SRA recently convened the first meeting of the Research Management Group that has been created as a result of the Rural R&D for Profit project Enhancing the sugar industry value chain.

This group provides important advice and guidance to activities within this major research initiative, which is part of the Commonwealth Government's Rural R&D for Profit programme.

The group has discussed regional initiatives that are occurring to optimise the harvest for the entire value chain, as well as discussing SRA's efforts across the industry.

More information on research and adoption activities as part of this project will be communicated in forthcoming SRA publications and email newsletter. ■



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Daniel Messina, Grower Relationship Manager, FNQ.



Kathy Zanco, Grower Relationship Manager, Proserpine - Plane Creek.

Familiar faces join QSL team

Queensland Sugar Limited (QSL) has appointed two new team members to serve growers in the Plane Creek, Proserpine and Far North Queensland (FNQ) milling districts.

Daniel Messina has started as QSL's Grower Relationship Manager for FNQ and will focus on keeping his local growers informed regarding their QSL Marketing Choice options and other QSL services and information. Daniel is already a familiar face in the local sugar industry and is a third-generation Babinda cane grower. As well as having considerable experience in agribusiness and on-farm practices, he's also been a Director of CANEGROWERS Cairns Region and Innisfail/Babinda Cane Productivity Services.

Daniel said he was looking forward to using his local insights to not only strengthen existing relationships between growers and QSL, but build new ones, and provide the region's cane growers with permanent, on-the-ground support from QSL. "It's an important time for the Queensland sugar industry, with the implementation of QSL Marketing Choice for growers supplying MSF Sugar mills," he said. "I'm here to help growers navigate that process, explain their QSL options and provide practical support as and when it's needed."

Daniel will be supported in his new role by QSL Industry Relationship Manager Carla Keith. To contact

Daniel or to make an appointment call 0429 660 238 or email him at Daniel.Messina@qsl.com.au

Kathy Zanco (nee Langdon) also recently started with QSL as a Grower Relationship Manager in the Proserpine and Plane Creek milling regions. Kathy is well known amongst Plane Creek growers, having previously worked as a Productivity Officer with Plane Creek Productivity Services Limited for five years.

Kathy said she's looking forward to not only building on her knowledge of the Plane Creek sugar industry and its growers, but also becoming a regular presence in Proserpine and getting to know its growers, their priorities and challenges. "A huge part of my previous role that I'm happy to have retained is the capacity to work with growers one-on-one in the field," she said. "QSL is really focused on ensuring that local growers supplying Wilmar mills have the QSL information and support that they need, and it's my primary focus to be the go-to person in that regard."

Kathy will be supported in her new role by local QSL Industry Relationship Manager Cathy Kelly. To contact Kathy Zanco or to make an appointment call 0437 645 342 or email Kathy.Zanco@qsl.com.au

Nominations sought for QSL Grower Directors

QSL is introducing Grower Directors to its Board.

Nominations for the election of QSL Grower Directors open on Tuesday 25 October 2016.

Nomination forms will be available at www.qsl.com.au or from your local mill office, CANEGROWERS office, cane grower organisation or ACFA representative.

To nominate for election as a Grower Director of QSL:

- you must be a sugar cane grower who supplies sugar cane under contract to a mill in Queensland; and
- you must not be an employee or officer of a Mill (at the time of appointment)

Signed nomination forms must be lodged with QSL by 5pm on Friday 4 November 2016.

Should the number of nominees exceed the number of vacancies, QSL Grower Representative Members will vote to elect the successful QSL Grower Director candidates.

For more information visit www.qsl.com.au, or contact your local QSL Industry Relationship Manager:

Northern Districts:

Carla Keith (0409 372 305 / carla.keith@qsl.com.au)

Central & Southern Districts:

Cathy Kelly (0409 285 074 / cathy.kelly@qsl.com.au)

QSL MARKETING CHOICE FOR MSF SUGAR GROWERS

MSF Sugar Growers wanting to nominate QSL as their GEI Sugar Marketer for the 2017 Season and beyond can now do so.

You have until **31 December 2016** to finalise QSL as your GEI Sugar Marketer of choice.

Growers wanting to participate in forward pricing are encouraged to contact QSL to discuss available products and deadlines.

Growers wanting to participate in the QSL Actively Managed Pool, QSL Harvest Pool and the QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool don't need to finalise their pool choices until February 2017.

Remember, to access QSL products including the QSL Harvest Pool, you must nominate QSL as your GEI Sugar Marketer and complete your CSA, GPA and Pool Manager Nomination Form by **31 December, 2016**.

Contact your QSL representatives

Daniel Messina p: 0429 660 238

e: daniel.messina@qsl.com.au

or **Carla Keith** p: 0409 372 305

e: carla.keith@qsl.com.au

for more information or to arrange an appointment.



BACK FROM THE BRINK

After 20 years of growing cane on the Atherton Tableland, Mareeba farmer Fred Ciranni was almost ready to throw in the towel. But a new and affordable variable rate irrigation system has changed all that.

By Wayne Griffin

With less than a metre of rainfall each year, irrigation is an essential part of growing cane in the Mareeba region. But as water and electricity prices skyrocket, many local growers are feeling the pinch and looking for ways to cut costs and boost productivity.



Pictured: (main) Fred Ciranni plugs the USB memory drive containing his irrigation plan into the variable rate controller, which piggy-backs on his Lindsay FieldBOSS system (top page 15); The Design Feats VRI desktop interface (bottom page 15).



In recent years managing the farm he shares with wife Julie had become increasingly difficult for Fred Ciranni.

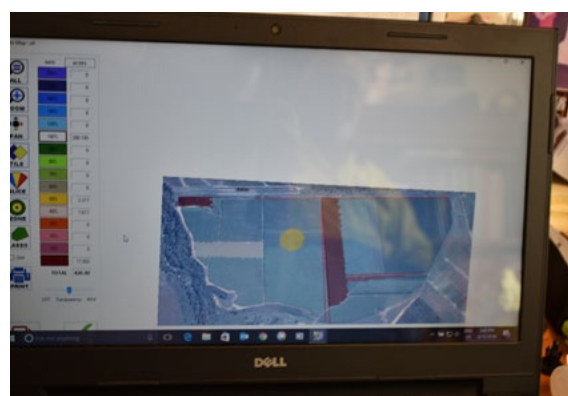
The 97 hectare property on the outskirts of Mareeba required up to 500 megalitres (ML) of water per year, but with allocations for just 400 ML, keeping the crop watered had become increasingly expensive.

To add to his frustration, Fred has a number of different soil types across his property, but his 730m centre pivot irrigator couldn't differentiate between wet and dry blocks as it walked across the farm, meaning Fred was forking out money to water blocks that were already too wet.

"I was struggling," says Fred. "To have over 200 acres [81 hectares] under half a circle and not be able to treat each paddock individually - it was making it very difficult for me.

"I couldn't isolate a paddock out of the whole farm. So let's say I was doing a one inch watering, the whole farm got one inch of water, whether it needed it or not.

"It was definitely frustrating. Not only was I paying for the water and electricity



to irrigate parts of the farm that didn't need it, but it was also impacting on the productivity of those areas because they were too wet. I was taking a double hit.

"To be honest, it was becoming a bit of struggle to manage the farm and I was definitely putting some serious thought into whether I wanted to keep going with cane."

"VRI is probably the greatest development since the invention of centre pivots and laterals because it gives you variability, it gives you a better management tool."

In an effort to overcome his irrigation woes, Fred began investigating variable rate irrigation (VRI) systems.

But while there were a number of impressive systems on the market, the cost of purchasing and installing them was often prohibitive.

That's when he stumbled upon the 6800 Advanced Irrigation Control system, designed by West Australian company Design Feats.

The 6800 AIC offered Fred the ability to regulate exactly how much water each area of the farm received, while costing less than half the price of other systems.

One year on and Fred has been blown away by the benefits his variable rate system is providing in terms of cost saving and time management.

"Prior to getting this system I was buying an extra 50-100 ML of water a year, but now I'm not purchasing any additional water," says Fred.

"That's because a lot of the time that I'm irrigating now, I'm only putting water on part of the farm - 20 acres here, 50 acres there, some blocks might only take 50% water, things like that.

"It's quite amazing really. I had a paddock of hay out there that was drying off ready for bailing, so it couldn't get wet, but I had the paddocks of cane around it that needed watering.

"The irrigator just walked over the farm and when it got to that hay paddock those valves just shut off."

And what about those annoying wet spots that had frustrated Fred for years?

"Not a problem anymore," he says.

"This system allows me to determine precisely how much water every part of the farm receives.

"Using the desktop program, I just mark out an area on the Google map of my farm and decide how much water I want to apply to that particular area.

"It might be 70%, 50%, 10% or no water at all, whatever it needs, I just punch in the numbers and as the irrigator passes over that area it will adjust the flow to those valves accordingly.

"And you can have multiple areas of any shape or size isolated right across the farm, with different application rates for each area.

Continues page 16



"Then you just save the map onto a USB memory stick that is plugged directly into the controller and off she goes, you don't have to do anything else."

Fred admits the VRI system has had a hugely positive impact on his farming system.

"It really is an amazing system that has made a massive difference in terms of farm management, cost savings and water savings."

And it's not just on water leases that Fred has seen the savings. In the past 12 months his power bills have dropped significantly.

"It's had a huge impact on electricity costs also, because now my pump, instead of running at 91% capacity as it had been, is running at 50-60%

"It's a system that most growers could install themselves and that means big savings."

depending on how much I've shut down on the irrigator.

"Water is a very expensive input and electricity is becoming ridiculous. With the savings on electricity alone, in a few years the system will have paid for itself."

EASY INSTALL

One of the reasons the Design Feats system was so appealing to Fred was its simplicity, which meant he could carry out most of the installation work himself.

"I hired a cherry-picker for two weeks and I went up there and installed all my computer boxes and wired them all up," says Fred.

"It's a system that most growers could install themselves and that means big savings.

"I just had an electrician to do all the hardwiring between the 415 volts and the controller, but all the rest I did myself, all the 24 volts wiring, all the plumbing, everything"

Another reason the 6800 AIC offers cost savings over other VRI systems is because it uses solenoids to control water flow.

"This system works electric over hydraulic. You have electric 24

volt solenoids that turn on and off hydraulic tubing, which then activate or deactivate the valves," says Fred.

"I looked at more expensive systems for about \$90,000 that had an electric solenoid for every single valve, but on this one you have a total of 48 solenoids running 246 sprinklers.

"You just have to work out what is the best spacing for each solenoid to determine how many sprinklers it operates.

"The more expensive systems may give you more exact control, but I think there's a lot that could go wrong with them and you'd end up having the electrician out every other month.

"This system is precise enough for what I need in terms of application, but simple enough that I can do most of the repairs and maintenance myself, and that's exactly what I want." ■



QRAA loan amounts lifted

The Queensland Government is increased the maximum amounts available for Sustainability and First Start loans offered to farmers through QRAA. Agriculture Minister Leanne Donaldson says the maximum amount available for a Sustainability Loan is now \$1.3 million.

"Sustainability Loans are for producers who are looking to expand, improve or diversify their enterprises," Ms Donaldson said.

"In addition, First Start Loans of up to \$2 million are now available to help producers purchase or buy into their first enterprise and assist farming families with their succession plans.

"The Palaszczuk Government is committed to boosting the productivity and profitability of Queensland agriculture and these increases will help support the growth of many more farming enterprises throughout the state."

The loans are offered through the Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme (PIPES) delivered by QRAA.

The interest-only period for repayments on both loans has been extended from two years to five.

"Sustainability loans are for producers who are looking to expand, improve or diversify their enterprises."

"These changes, combined with interest rates as low as 3.11 per cent and no fees or charges, are a win for rural and regional Queensland and will have a flow on effect for the regional Queensland economy," Ms Donaldson said.

"The government is clearly focussed on stimulating renewal and investing for the

future as well as reducing the financial pressure on producers during difficult times."

The Minister encouraged primary producers to take advantage of the scheme and the significant funds available.

"These updates are available to both active account holders and to new applicants," she said.

"With larger amounts at producer's disposal, I look forward to watching Queensland producers take their enterprises to the next level in the coming months."

A dedicated team of QRAA Client Liaison Officers, based across regional Queensland, are available to discuss the application process. ■

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Is my land suitable for **PIVOT IRRIGATION?**

Supplied by Reinke

Is my land suitable for irrigation? This is a question we hear more and more often, as a growing number of farmers look to take advantage of the proven benefits offered by pivot irrigation.

However, as the up-take of mechanised irrigation has increased, so too has the domination of simple flat open paddocks, which are seen as the easy option and are often the first to be put under irrigation.

This has led to both irrigation suppliers and farmers seeking to push boundaries and look at other locations that previously may not have been considered for this type of irrigation.

Sugarcane growing regions are prime examples of such areas as they quite often reside on rolling country, sometimes even steep hillsides, with many obstacles, both environmental and manmade, restricting the application of a circular moving machine.

There are however many solutions provided by manufacturers in the form of modified and purpose built machines to handle these exact production hurdles.

These range from simple part-circle machines that operate in an arc less than 360°, right through to drop spans, wrap spans, swing arm corners (SAC) and super swing arm corners (SSAC).

Your irrigation supplier needs to thoroughly understand your needs to be capable of designing a solution to suit

your requirements, and not simply sell you a product.

In the example pictured you can see a Reinke Sugargator pivot that has been specifically designed with double wrap spans, allowing the system to 'wrap' around the house and yard to maximise the area covered. (Figure 1 shows the area covered and the additional production area gained.)

Uneven terrain and how the system handles it is a key design factor to be considered when implementing a system such as this.

The house pictured is located on a considerable hill with steep slopes in some areas.

Reinke's unique Hook-and-Receiver joint allows for span movement in all directions, including roll allowing superior terrain handling.

Designing a system with specific span lengths and perhaps adding 'Extreme' spans, which increase slope handling,

can also be advantageous and should be discussed with your irrigation designer.

Reinke has been supplying irrigation solutions to farmers worldwide for over 60 years. With their head office located in the heartland of irrigation - Nebraska, USA, and with a warehouse facility and staff located in Brisbane Queensland, Reinke is committed to providing superior solutions for Australian cane growers.

For further information on how Reinke can help you maximise your production, please visit www.reinke.com or contact Reinke Australia (07) 3726 0077. ■



Photo credit; Thinkwater Callide Valley and Reinke Australia

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"It is simple, it is very intuitive. You can take a 30-year-old pivot and bring it right up to date with this unit," said **Jared Gardner**, a grower in Rocky Ford, Colorado, USA, who tested the product on his Zimmatic pivot and two other brands.

Unlike other remote irrigation control products, Pivot Control mounts at the pivot point and combines with GPS at the end of the pivot for increased precision and greater flexibility.

Growers can operate their pivot in the field at the control box or remotely using FieldNET – minimizing the chance for user error.

"There's really nothing else like it on the market. Pivot Control provides growers an affordable and easy way to own features that can more effectively manage irrigation resources."

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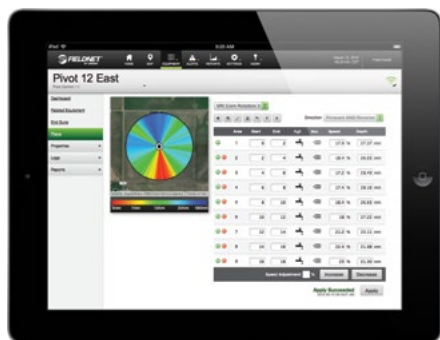
Pivot Control comes standard with 360-sector variable rate irrigation (VRI), offering twice the number of sectors available on most basic VRI products.

Growers working with agronomists and crop specialists can upload custom prescriptions to FieldNET with a touch of a button.

"There's really nothing else like it on the market. Pivot Control provides growers an affordable and easy way to own features that can more effectively manage irrigation resources," said Reece Andrews, FieldNET business manager.

Visit www.myfieldnet.com/pivot-control for more information. ■

Pictured: (above) FIELDNET Pivot Control; (below) mobile user interface.



Bag recycling leads to environment award

Impact Fertilisers was presented with an environment award at the Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference gala dinner in Cairns recently.

The Platypus Award recognises the company's role in the successful 2015 Queensland fertiliser bag recovery pilot project.

More than 72,000 one tonne bags were collected and recycled through the program run by Farm Waste Recovery (FWR).

The scheme is now industry-wide for the 2016 season.

Dr Ken Peverill from KIP Consultancy Services received a Snapper Award for career contributions that helped drive national agricultural productivity and nutrient use efficiency while assisting in minimising environmental impacts.

A major part of Dr Peverill's work has been aimed at improving soil and plant analysis as a tool to fine-tune fertiliser and soil amendment recommendations. ■



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PLANS FOR PAPER PULP TO BOOST GROWER INCOMES

The push is on to build a pilot plant to prove that a new method of turning bagasse into paper pulp is a viable diversification path for the sugarcane industry.

The group behind the drive, Enviro Fibre Pty Ltd, believes the new process should provide an additional income stream for growers and answer environmental concerns around existing paper-making processes which utilise caustic soda and sodium sulphide.

Along with Babinda growers **Rose** and **Stephano Destro**, the company chairman Les Nielsen is excited about the prospect of a cleaner process using bagasse from sugar mills as its raw ingredient.

"We are a group of Babinda growers who feel that our sugarcane stick has more value than just sugar," Rose says.

"We believe the outcome from this could be an extra \$30-\$50 a tonne in value adding – who wouldn't be excited?"

Les Nielsen says it's a project that has 10 years of work behind it.

"It was started by Farming for the Future, Babinda (FFF) which is a small community group driven by the desire to

see this region with a sustainable future," he says. "FFF's vision statement relating to the sugar industry is what we call the Three F's – fuel, fibre and food.

"We are in a fortunate position that sugarcane can be adapted to provide all three and the projects we are working on for environmental, social and economic reasons are extremely exciting."



PAPER FROM BAGASSE

Enviro Fibre says there is a market for quality bagasse paper pulp with Australian paper mills currently importing it from Thailand at a cost of up to \$1,000 per tonne.

With support from SRA, Professor **William Doherty** and Dr **Tom Rainey** at the Queensland University of Technology have conducted extensive laboratory tests and report they have achieved a high quality bleached pulp through an environmentally friendly process.

"Some years ago the then Sugar Research and Development Corporation provided a seminar on alternate uses for cane in Mackay," Les says.

"We listened to Dr Tom Rainey from QUT who had a background in the paper pulp industry and since then we've developed a relationship with QUT to overcome the hurdles and impediments to establishing a pulp/bagasse mill scale operation."

The process results in a 'black liquor' by-product which has potential as a crop fertiliser with initial pot trials on sugarcane, soybean, maize and oats showing a performance similar to conventional fertilisers with increased bacteria populations and suppressed fungal growth.

CAPITAL RAISING PLANS

The next step for Enviro Fibre is to secure the support of a milling company and capital, around \$6 million.

"When the season is finished we would like to discuss our project with local sugar milling companies but we will also look outside of the cane industry, such as with paper manufacturers," Les says.

"There have been some failures in the past and this may be perceived as a high risk venture but the returns could be significant – bagasse used for power generation is worth around \$50 per tonne but bagasse for paper production, based on our research, could be worth up to \$500 per tonne.

"So far this has been an excellent example of collaboration between grassroots growers, a research organisation, QUT, and funding bodies such as SRA.

"The bagasse paper pulp project has the potential to provide a diversified additional income stream for growers and we are committed to pursuing it," he said.

For more info, contact **Enviro Fibre Pty Ltd** on (07) 40671230. ■



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	7 days to 9am 10.10.16	17.10.16		
Mossman	128	35	1670	1897
Mareeba AP	1	2	416	751
Cairns	10	18	1179	1729
Mt Sophia	24	51	2160	2894
Babinda	0	0	2844	3753
Innisfail	20	42	2844	3135
Tully	0	36	3020	3647
Cardwell	0.6	31	1868	1807
Lucinda	0	11	1826	1831
Ingham	1	32	1724	1717
Abergowrie	0	10	1143	1561
Townsville	0	0	947	933
Ayr DPI	0	14	541	780
Proserpine	1	29	1299	1136
Mirani	11	0	1283	1252
Mackay	1	0	1455	1293
Sarina (Plane Ck)	24	7	1655	1423
Bundaberg	2	0.6	765	795
Childers South	6	0	744	687
Maryborough	8	5	735	940
Tewantin	3	25	982	1425
Eumundi	0	1	910	1383
Nambour	4	0.8	921	1376
Woongoolba	14	0.2	447	1088
Murwillumbah	3	1	1257	1284
Ballina	4	1	1116	1510
Woodburn	0	2	722	1161



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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.

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Herbert River – Burdekin

HBM billet planter, good condition. Ph. 4777 4217 A/H

Prime mover International 2670 1982 model \$12000, Mcgrath 40ft trailer \$8000, 1982 Commodore \$3000 Ph 4776 6249

976 inter tricycle. Front mounted implements. 10 foot rear wheel wheel spacing. \$6000 neg. Ph 0417 637 390

Ford TW30 tricycle tractor. 10 foot spaced rear wheels. 180HP. Rebuilt engine. 3 row bonel multi cultivator. 7 row Irvin sprayer with stainless tank and hardi controller. Ph 0417 637 390

1993 Kenworth T600 Water Truck 16,000lt Tank; Drop Bars, Hose Reel, Side & Centre Sprays 5 inc Sothern Cross Pump \$65,000 + GST; 1995 Komatsu WA 380 Loader, Quick Hitch, Jib Bucket, Forks \$65,000 + GST Ph: 0419 795 165

2500 Cameco Full Track Harvester, C12 Cat engine, all piston and vane pumps, 4 blade chopper, two speed track drives, can cut two rows at a time up to 1.7m row spacing, plus extras. POA. Phone 0417 710 544

Brand new never used LS Heavy Duty 4 pin final drive hub to suite Cameco harvesters. \$10k Phone 0417 710 544

Mackay – Proserpine

Half tracks, suit 7000 Toft harvester, excellent conditions. \$5,000 plus GST. Ph 0409 195 381

Brand new 14.00 R 25 tyres for sale under half of new price. Ph 0488 300 361

Valtra 6400 4WD Tractor - 100HP, Air-Con Cab, 2004 Model. 3700 Hours. Good Condition. \$30,000. (incl GST) ONO Phone: 0418 710 958 / 4950 3048

Fertiliser Bin. 2t trailable side dresser in vgc. Suitable for 1.6, 1.7 & 1.8 m rows. \$9900 inc GST. ONO. Ph: 0409 221 601

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)

Bundaberg - Rocky Point

Grizzly GM60-836 series, 36 plate offset discs, folding for transport, 4.5m wide open, closed at less than 3.5m, discs half worn, some spares included. \$48,400 inc gst. Ph: 0427 769 086

Pair Goodyear 620R42 DT812 series tyres. VGC with 75% thread \$2200 incl. Walterscheid Cat3 hydraulic top link. VGC. \$990 incl. Phone 41260153 evenings

1 Tonne Bag lifter \$1200, 6ft Slasher F/c \$1250, 4 row Janke Precession Planter for planting soy beans, peanuts etc, comes with assortment of plates chain & sprockets \$6750, 24 plate Rawlings offsets 24" discs \$4750. Phone 0418874615

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

Wanted

Rear axle-complete or parts- off Toft Robot MK2 cane harvester. Ph 4126 0153 evenings
Wanted - Land plane. Tableland district, Ph 0409 912 062

110-120HP Tractor, 4WD, Air cab, low hours Bundaberg 0427 599 636 or 4159 9637

Castor wheel assembly to suit Hodge linkage scoop. 1t belt spreader. Mackay area. Ph: 0427 120 499

Wanted to Buy. Tip Truck 7-9 Tonnes or similar. Ph 0428 761 549. Herbert Area.

Wanted: Cane harvester suitable for billet planting Ph 4159 3323 or 0438 593 324

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

Positions Vacant

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

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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