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COVER IMAGE: Burdekin grower Gary Spotswood is one of an increasing number of innovative growers harnessing mother nature to improve soil health.

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There is politics and there is respect – surely both are achievable!

By Dan Galligan, CEO CANEGROWERS

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote in this column about the feeling of building momentum and political manoeuvring ahead of an impending Queensland state election. It was commentary then, it is reality now!

Events of the past three weeks should give all cane growers in Queensland pause for thought, as they closely examine the public policy statements by our political leaders.

Many politicians have been making moves, as they seek to intervene to break the deadlock in On-Supply Agreement negotiations between Wilmar and QSL.

The highest profile and strongest intervention has been from both the Federal and State members of the Liberal National Party, who have shown a commitment to understanding the issue and following up with some courageous solutions.

On exactly the other end of the spectrum, I was flabbergasted to see the public statements from Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk in response to the LNP proposal of a further legislative amendment.

Let's be absolutely clear, CANEGROWERS fully understands the State Labor Party's position on the marketing dispute.

What is equally clear is that they do not understand and seem unwilling to understand our position.

Indeed, the Premier was at pains in a media statement recently to simply repeat the comments of the Sugar Milling Council, and, in doing so, paint a fundamentally negative image of our industry and its future.

A shamefully one-sided and narrow view.

Then, to make matters worse, in a response to a question put to her in Parliament requesting that she outline her understanding of the dispute, the Premier was left befuddled.

CANEGROWERS has gone and will continue to go to great lengths to

act in a bi-partisan way and rebuild a line of communication with the State Government / Labor Party, as I think is our duty to members.

But as in any relationship, we expect that our members and their issues should be treated with respect and equal diligence by anyone we engage with.

Governing for "all" Queenslanders was not an attribute on display in State Parliament.

The Wilmar marketing dispute is not the only issue we are dealing with as an industry.

Oppressively dry conditions in the south, pivotal announcements around national electricity policy and the ever-present environmental debate and impending discussion paper on reef regulations are also firmly on our agenda.

No one issue can dictate our strategies or dominate our relationships.

For all issues, our measure of respect and success will be clear evidence of engaged, informed and proactive decision makers.

Room for improvement abounds! ■

“We expect that our members and their issues should be treated with respect”



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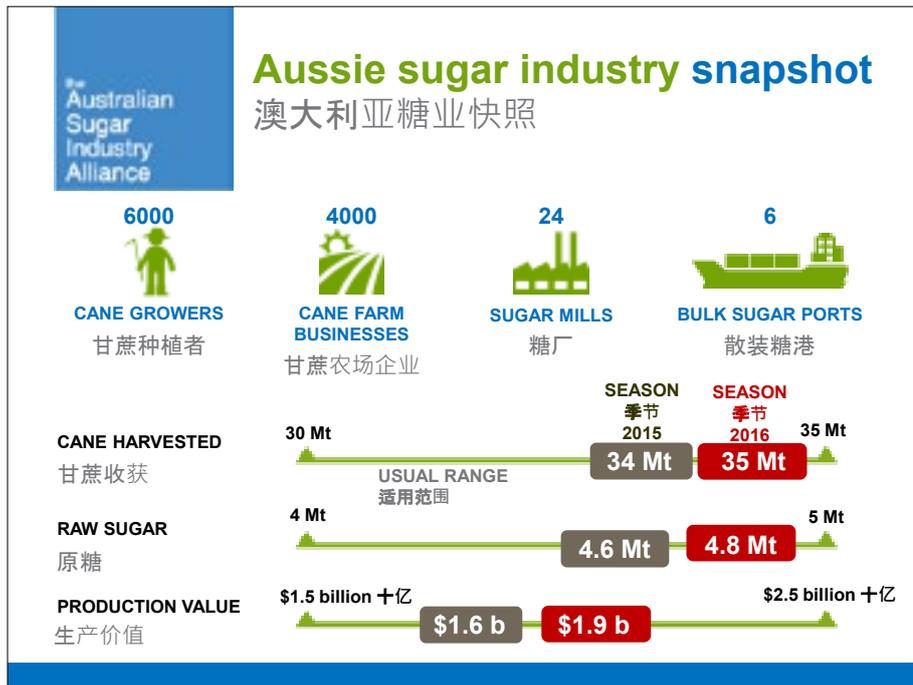
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Chinese imports of sugar under investigation

This image is part of a presentation made earlier this month to a visiting government delegation from the Republic of China.



The group from China's Ministries of Commerce, Finance, Agriculture and Customs is investigating the impact on their domestic industry of an alleged surge in imports of sugar.

CANEGROWERS Head-Economics **Warren Males**, on behalf of the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance, outlined the scale of production in Australia and the structure of the industry.

He explained that domestic industry problems in China were not caused by imports but rather the growth in imports was a reflection of structural difficulties within the Chinese industry and strong demand for sugar from refineries as a result of shortfall in domestic production.

Chinese authorities are considering the introduction of a short-term safeguard mechanism which could affect trade. The Australian perspective is that this is not an appropriate solution in an environment where demand and the volume of imports is expected to continue to increase. ■

Diplomat wields cane knife in Mackay



Pictured (above): Consul-General of Japan, Hidehiro Hosaka (centre) learning some new skills in a Mackay cane paddock with (L-R) the Vice-Consul Katsuhiko Akaizawa, grower Greg Plath, CANEGROWERS Head-Economics Warren Males and grower Tony Ross.

The Consul-General of Japan tried hand-cutting sugarcane when he visited the Mackay region recently.

CANEGROWERS hosted the visit by the Brisbane-based **Hidehiro Hosaka** and his Vice-Consul **Katsuhiko Akaizawa**.

Their mission is to create better understanding and promote the development of ties between Japan and Australia.

During the visit to Mackay they toured **Tony Ross's** farm to learn about modern cane growing methods and **Greg Plath** demonstrated old style cane cutting.

Report sounds warning on future network tariffs

Growers from the Burdekin, Tableland, Central and Southern districts travelled to Brisbane for the public launch of a CANEGROWERS commissioned report which sounds a warning on Ergon plans for future network tariffs.

The launch was also attended by politicians from the Liberal National Party, Katters' Australian Party and One Nation, representatives from Queensland Treasury and the Department of Energy and Water Supply, along with farming organisations and the National Irrigators' Council.

The report, completed by the Sapere Research Group, examines two proposals put forward by Ergon which are soon to be the subject of a final determination by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER):

"Ergon is apparently trying to avert a hefty network expansion bill with these penalising tariffs which aim to reduce electricity usage," CANEGROWER CEO Dan Galligan told journalists covering the launch.

The visit was an opportunity for CANEGROWERS to brief Mr Hosaka and Mr Akaizawa on the 50-year trading relationship between the two countries.

They also discussed the importance of the Japan Australia Economic Partnership Agreement including some technical issues which need to be resolved to encourage more efficient exports of sugar from the Queensland industry.

The group visited the Mackay bulk sugar terminal where they inspected Queensland's world-class raw sugar quality sampling and testing procedures. ■



"But expansion isn't needed because Ergon's own data shows there is a lot of spare capacity in the network."

Ergon's 2016 Distribution Annual Planning Report shows that 98% of the low voltage network has enough spare capacity to meet all forecast peak demand growth for the foreseeable future.

The CANEGROWERS-Sapere report found the network congestion data used by Ergon in its tariff proposal overstates congestion by a factor of approximately 375.

The scale of the pricing distortion at \$1.8 billion over five years.

"Expansion isn't needed because Ergon's own data shows there is a lot of spare capacity in the network."

"This situation facing regional Queenslanders getting their power from Ergon is not a one-off," Mr Galligan said.

"The same flawed approaches have also been applied to Energex and in other parts of the National Electricity Market.

"In the view of Sapere and CANEGROWERS, Ergon's network tariff statement breaks national electricity rules and the AER should reject it.

"CANEGROWERS calls Ergon to re-submit a proposal that contains fair pricing which does not put an unnecessary cost burden on Queensland energy users."

Summer peak (energy and demand) tariffs would apply hefty penalty rates to businesses using a lot of power during weekday business hours and for residential customers using a lot of power during afternoons and early evening, every day of the week.

Under **inclining block tariffs**, rates go up in three steps as usage increases. These do not reflect network supply costs but instead unfairly penalise above average users of electricity and reward lower than average users.

The full CANEGROWERS-Sapere report, *Errors in Australian Energy Regulator's Draft Decision on Ergon Energy's 2016 Tariff Structure Statement*, can be downloaded here: <http://files.canegrowers.com.au/queensland/web-CANEGROWERS-Sapere-Report-Launch-document.pdf>

Pictured (above) Simon Orme, Sapere Research Group, CANEGROWERS Policy Council member Rajinder Singh and CANEGROWERS Head-Economics Warren Males at the launch.

ANGER and ACTION at contract delays...

The urgent plight of Queensland cane growers waiting for fair, grower choice Cane Supply Agreements with Wilmar Sugar for the 2017 season has hit both the national political agenda and media headlines.

Growers in the Herbert River, Burdekin, Proserpine and Plane Creek district, backed by CANEGROWERS, have grabbed every opportunity to demand action.

As we count down to the start of the 2017 crush, Wilmar and QSL continue to meet but are yet to reach the crucial On-Supply Agreement which will facilitate grower marketing choice and enable the CSAs to be finalised.

The Queensland Liberal National Party Opposition is poised to introduce further amendments to the *Sugar Industry Act* into State Parliament. These amendments will provide for an arbitration mechanism, as already exists for CSAs, to break a deadlock in negotiations.

At the Australian Government level, there is a renewed push for a sugar industry code of conduct.

Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Agriculture Minister **Barnaby Joyce** left the door open for further Federal Government involvement.



Call to action in The Courier-Mail



Pictured (left): CANEGROWERS has taken its message about the urgency of finalising Cane Supply Agreements in the Wilmar Sugar milling districts into city cafes and offices via an eye-catching advertisement in Queensland's statewide newspaper, The Courier-Mail.

The advertisement featured the faces of members who are affected to bring home to readers who may have heard about the dispute in the media that it is about real people, and families, and the future of their livelihoods.

"If these things are not resolved we retain all options at a federal level," Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce told growers. "This issue is going to be resolved ... I've got the firepower on my side to deal with it. The smartest thing for Wilmar is to resolve this as soon as possible,"

Barnaby Joyce, Deputy PM.

UNITED BURDEKIN RALLY

Burdekin growers united in protest, driving in a bumper to bumper convoy through the region to rally with signs demanding an end to the impasse.

CANEGROWERS Burdekin Chairman **Phil Marano** said the level of frustration was such that at a time when sugar prices were high, people were looking at alternative crops.

"We've had enough, we need action," he said. "Wilmar's only interest is in stripping as much revenue from growers as they can. I've never seen this much worry towards a miller ever."

"We've had enough, we need action."

Phil Marano

"We are after competition in the marketing arena."

Michael Pisano

GROWERS MEET MPS IN INGHAM AND AYR

Growers and their families met in huge numbers with federal and state politicians to leave them in no doubt about the level of anger and stress in the

Wilmar Sugar milling districts over the delays to fair, commercial agreements for the 2017 season.

CANEGROWERS members from the Plane Creek and Proserpine regions travelled hundreds of kilometres to join their Burdekin and Herbert River colleagues.

At times heated and emotional, the meetings heard commitments that the Queensland Opposition Leader **Tim Nicholls MP** and Shadow Agriculture Minister and Member for Burdekin **Dale Last** would move to quickly introduce amendments to the *Sugar Industry Act* to State Parliament in a bid to break the QSL-Wilmar impasse.

Mr Nicholls told growers that the issue should be resolved by negotiation. "But when people can't act like grown-ups the government has to step in and take the lead," he said.

Federal Member for Dawson **George Christensen** told the gatherings he is continuing to push his colleagues in government for an industry code of conduct.

CANEGROWERS Herbert River Chairman **Michael Pisano** said growers had been negotiating since 2014 and the uncertainty was taking its toll.

"We are not wanting to lock Wilmar out of having growers choose Wilmar but in the same respect we want growers to be able to choose QSL or other competition," he said. "We are after competition in the marketing arena." ■

Pictured (left): Deputy PM Barnaby Joyce talks to growers Sam Blanco, Angelo Girgenti and Ross Blanco (partly obscured) with Mario Cuzzubbo and Frank and Michael Russo looking on.



Pictured (above): Deputy PM Barnaby Joyce with Mayor Ramon Jayo talking to growers in Ingham.

Pictured (right): Jim Richards, Don Viero and Mark Castellanella demanding action.

Policy Update

Environment with Matt Kealley

Industry with Burn Ashburner

Economics with Warren Males

Chemicals in your shed

Do you use Shirtan®? Work is continuing around the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the possible phase-out of this fungicide. CANEGROWERS has been seeking feedback from industry for a submission due 17 March. A list of alternatives to treat pineapple disease is on the SRA website www.sugarresearch.com.au

Warning – science content!

One of my favourite TV shows is *Mythbusters*, which runs experiments to either bust or confirm urban myths sent in by the audience. In the cane industry two current science projects could do this.

The 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement is bringing together the vast amounts of scientific work on the Great Barrier Reef and factors affecting its health.

It will hopefully bust a few myths and identify the science giving greater insight into the impacts of dissolved inorganic nitrogen, gully erosion and Crown of Thorns starfish.

The NESP Tropical Water Quality Hub Project 25 is a grower-designed project that monitors water quality in catchments to find likely hotspots of pollution and then work on solutions.

The strategy of small-scale monitoring, real time data and collaboration between growers and researchers is promising.

Growers have often said to me, "If there is a problem on my farm, I want to know so I can fix it!" This project allows that to happen and the myths may be busted. ■



Enhanced Crop Insurance Investigations

CANEGROWERS is involved in a project, run by QFF through the Drought and Climate Adaptation program, aimed at producing enhanced multi-peril crop insurance systems.

Research has been designed to provide clear recommendations to agricultural industries, the insurance industry and government on how a more liquid and viable market for agricultural insurance products can be established and maintained. Currently the project involves the sugarcane and cotton industries, with CANEGROWERS providing significant info and feedback on the type, frequency and severity of risks.

The research will involve:

1. A focused review of current and potential data sources and models needed to facilitate the development of affordable and effective re/ insurance products;
2. Unravelling long-term climate data, their patterns and their mechanistic causes – linkage to crop modelling over the long-term.
3. Working with insurance industry leaders to investigate products that could be developed based on improved data and modelling and considering affordability and market liquidity;
4. Consultation with insurance companies, ag organisations, governments and other key stakeholders to 'test out' potential insurance product innovations and determine the willingness of growers to pay the expected premiums;
5. Discussions with the farm finance sector to understand how risk management tools (insurance) will affect risk profiling on rural lending. ■



ACCC pre-decision conference

CANEGROWERS participated in an Australian Competition and Consumer Commission pre-decision conference in relation to our application for CANEGROWERS companies to be authorised to negotiate terms and conditions on behalf of present and future members with mills, marketing and associated entities. The application is to ensure collective bargaining can occur without a risk of breaching the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

ASA Trade Committee

A Chinese investigation team has visited Australia to verify information provided by the Australian Sugar industry Alliance that any increase in imports of raw sugar from Australia has been gradual and progressive in response to demand and has not caused or threatened serious injury to the Chinese industry. We are working with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and colleagues in Brazil to coordinate a response should the team make an adverse finding and move to implement sugar safeguards.

Marketing

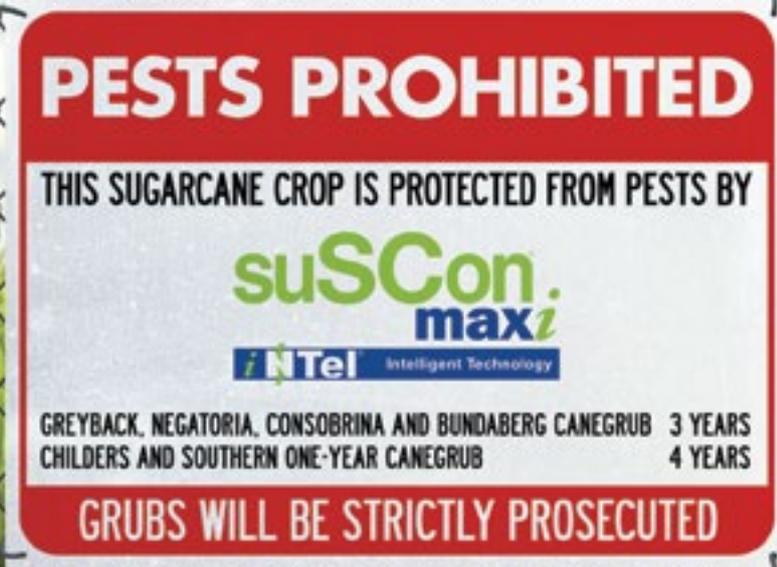
CANEGROWERS will work with the Liberal National Party and others to ensure the LNP proposed mechanism to resolve the impasse in On-Supply Agreement negotiations between Wilmar and QSL is as efficient and effective as possible.

Electricity

The CANEGROWERS-Sapere report (pg 5) that found Ergon's Tariff Structure Statement is not cost reflective or backed by evidence will be the basis of CANEGROWERS submission to the Finkel independent review of the electricity system. ■



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REGIONAL CONSULTATION

helps shape new SRA strategic plan

By Leigh Clement, Executive Manager, Investor Relations

SRA is in the process of developing a new five-year strategic plan, which will guide the future direction of SRA's investment in research, development and adoption activities for the Australian sugarcane industry.

As part of that process, we have held regional consultation sessions to hear directly from growers, millers and other stakeholders about the requirements, opportunities, and challenges facing the entire industry and also their local region. These consultation sessions were held in seven locations across the industry.

SRA thanks all those who attended and provided their feedback.

There were some common themes that emerged from the consultation sessions, particularly around issues such as soil health, extension and adoption of research information, varieties, productivity, improving communication and engagement, farming practices, knowledge and capability, and pests and diseases.

There was also strong discussion around harvesting, product diversification, industry image, milling, technology, and some constitutional issues.

It was clear that there are some important emerging research needs for the industry, with soil health being one of the most commonly discussed items. Following on from that, it is also clear that SRA needs to continue to improve the way we communicate with growers and how we facilitate the adoption of new technology by sugarcane growers and millers.

There was also an eagerness to understand more about SRA's funding process for research, and some constitutional issues regarding commercialisation and intellectual property.

As a research organisation, it is important that SRA continues to be in touch with new innovations and technologies, and it is also

absolutely vital that we are in touch with the grass-roots needs of our investors, which is why these consultation sessions were so important.

Consultation sessions were held in seven locations across the industry. SRA thanks all those who attended and provided their feedback.

The feedback from these meetings will be discussed at a meeting of SRA delegates at the end of February, and also by the SRA Board. This will then follow through to the development of SRA's next five-year strategic plan for 2017/18 to 2021/22.

Once that plan is developed, SRA investors and industry stakeholders will be able to hear more about it via the regular SRA e-newsletter. You can also contact the local SRA Adoption Officer in your local region, whose contact details are available on the SRA website, www.sugarresearch.com.au.

For those who were unable to attend the meetings, there is an online survey available on the SRA website, or you can contact me directly on lclement@sugarresearch.com.au or (07) 3331 3329.

The development of the plan is just the start of the process. The conversation will continue regularly as issues arise and priorities change, and SRA is committed to continuing to respond to the needs of our investors. ■



Attendees at the Tully regional forum.



Attendees at the Gordonvale regional forum.

NO SUPPORT FOR SUGAR TAX

Labor joins the Turnbull Government and crossbench Senators in ruling out a sugar tax.

Federal Minister for Health and Sport **Greg Hunt** has said the Turnbull Government will not support a tax on sugar as part of its ongoing campaign to tackle the challenge of obesity.

Echoing industry sentiment, Mr Hunt said a tax that drives up the cost of family grocery bills is not an appropriate way to encourage all Australians to live healthy lives.

"Obesity and poor diets are complex public health issues with multiple contributing factors, requiring a community-wide approach as well as behaviour change by individuals. We do not support a new tax on sugar to address this issue," the Minister said.

"We don't believe increasing the family grocery bill at the supermarket is the answer to this challenge.

"Fresh fruit and vegetables are already effectively discounted as they do not have a GST applied.

"Whereas the GST is added to the cost of items such as chips, lollies, sugary drinks, confectionery, snacks, ice-cream and biscuits.

"Obesity and poor diets are complex public health issue with multiple contributing factors, requiring a community-wide approach as well as behaviour change by individuals. We do not support a new tax on sugar to address this issue."

"We're committed to tackling obesity, but increasing the family's weekly shop at the supermarket isn't the answer."

Opposition leader **Bill Shorten** also ruled out Labor support for a sugar tax, saying, "We don't have any plans for a sugar tax".

Meanwhile, outspoken Senators **Pauline Hanson** and **Derryn Hinch** rejected calls for such a tax, saying it would be unfair and unworkable.

'It's about time people took responsibility for their own actions and what they put in their mouth,' Senator **Hanson** told Network Seven.

Earlier this month, the Prime Minister flagged a new focus on preventive health that will give people the tools and information to live active and healthy lives.

The Federal Government also launched phase two of its \$7 million **Girls Make Your Move** campaign, aimed at increasing physical activity for girls and young women. This is now being rolled out across Australia.

"Our \$160 million **Sporting Schools** program is getting kids involved in physical activity," Minister Hunt said.

"Already around 6,000 schools across the country have been involved – with many more to come.

"Our **Health Star Rating** system helps people to make healthier choices when choosing packaged foods at the supermarket and encourages the food industry to reformulate their products to be healthier.

"The **Healthy Weight Guide** website provides useful advice including tips and tools to encourage physical activity and healthy eating to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

"The **Healthy Food Partnership** with the food industry and public health groups is increasing people's health knowledge and is supporting them to make healthier food and drink choices in order to achieve better health outcomes."

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Alternatively you can also utilise the ATO website to locate and combine your super. Go to ato.gov.au and take control of your super today.

Spending a few minutes now rounding up your super, could really assist in reaching your retirement dreams.

AustSafe Super is the industry super fund for rural and regional Australia, and has been committed to looking after members' super throughout their working life, and into retirement for over 25 years.

* As at 30 June 2016.



DUBAI CONFERENCE OFFERS MARKET INSIGHTS

By Dougall Lodge, QSL General Manager Trading and Risk



Sometime around February every year, representatives from the global sugar industry and its extended value chain of international producers, millers, refiners, traders, end users and service partners head to Dubai for the annual sugar conference.

This year's event was the largest so far, with around 750 representatives all on hand to join conference sessions, hold meetings, and gain an insight into the key trends that look set to influence the sugar market for the year to come.

QSL Treasury Manager **Matt Page** and I returned from this year's conference with some great insights and inputs from some of our global partners for creating value through pricing and physical trading for our 2016 and 2017 pools.

We've come back with confirmation of our market view that there could be some further upside opportunity in the next few months, but that in the future the return to a potential surplus in supply could weigh on prices.

In contrast to the 2016 conference, the trade representatives present were quite split on their outlook for 2017.

The potential timing and scale of India's imminent import requirements and the knock-on effect to various trade flow estimates, as well as the buying on the sugar futures markets, dominated many of the discussions but there were also some other really interesting observations shared.

Here's what we considered to be the key takeaways and how they could impact the direction for sugar market prices in 2017 and beyond.

1. REFINED SUGAR DEFICIT

A white sugar deficit is likely to continue in the near term and through to year-end 2017. Smuggling into China is not expected to slow anytime soon with expected MOFCOM (Chinese Ministry of Commerce) announcement for a tariff increase likely to mean that the market for smuggled white sugar will be even more attractive and that any India requirements are likely being in white form.

2. THE BEET IS BACK

European sugar beet is back for 2017/18 and will be a major feature of the market in the future. Sudzucker, the large German-based producer of around 5 million metric tonnes (mt) of sugar across nine countries, briefed conference delegates on how they have been investing and improving their efficiencies in the field, factory and supply chain over the past 10 years.

European beet is now the highest yielding sugar output per hectare in the world compared to all cane producers and other beet markets.

Other major European-based producers, like Tereos, have also been gearing up for the extra production, and in some cases have put in place trading teams across the world, including Asia, to handle their anticipated growth in export volumes.

Eastern Europe, Russia, Poland and Ukraine have also been increasing their production.

These beet producers do not focus too much on the white premium over raw sugar, like the refiners that QSL and other raw sugar marketers sell to, and we've already seen a deterioration of the white premium levels in 2016 and 2017 delivery periods of around \$100 per tonne to a lower level of around \$70 per tonne for 2018 delivery periods in anticipation of the new sugar availability. Could this go even lower?

3. THAIS ON THE RISE

There was a much larger representation of Thai millers at this year's conference than in the past, with Thailand's 2016/17 raw sugar production potentially higher than expected.

We heard that the low-end estimates of near 90 million mt of cane are now back up towards 95 million mt, with some analysts even calling it to be back above 100 million mt. The harvest is very much underway with near perfect crushing conditions, so we'll be watching this one closely. Any extra sugar will weigh on MAR18 and MAY18 contracts.

4. STRONG BRAZIL ESTIMATE

Brazil may have more sugar production than expected. We've heard some indications that 2016/17 may wind up more than 36 million mt vs 35.5 million mt. While this increase may not sound like much, the additional sugar will overhang the March delivery period and could plug the intercrop shortfall. Crystallization capacity has been expanded for 2017/18.

5. BUYING AHEAD

It feels a little like 2016 déjà vu, with the funds seeming to be bullish and itching to jump in buying again and the trade still have to buy.



After a good year in 2016 beating the sugar trade, the speculators may try to double up again in 2017.

The actual commercial sugar trade is still net short. Producers like Brazil and Thailand have largely sold already but the buyers who use the sugar have not yet bought and still have to come to the market.

Despite the expectation of potential additional sugar requirements as outlined for Europe, Brazil and Thailand, the futures market has already begun to price this in.

The commercial sugar buyers still have to buy futures in MAR17, MAY17 and JUL17 to match their needs.

Any bullish news like India's needs and the ongoing massive Chinese requirements could continue to fuel a resurgence of speculator buying and flush out some more end-user and refinery-related buying activity.

We heard some people in the trade are expecting up to 25 c/lb, and on the higher end even up to 28 c/lb.

MARKETING CHOICE

A lot of the old friends of the Queensland sugar industry were also very interested and happy to hear of the developments and progress on the Marketing Choice legislation with MSF Sugar and Tully Sugar during 2016, but shared our frustration at the late timings of any resolution still not being reached with Wilmar and its impact on growers not being able to price with QSL yet.

There was also much widespread relief shared with us when they heard about QSL's ongoing management role for the STL terminals. ■

DISCLAIMER: This report contains information of a general or summary nature. While all care is taken in the preparation of this report, the reliability, accuracy or completeness of the information provided in the document is not guaranteed. The update on marketing and pricing activity does not constitute financial product or investment advice. QSL does not accept any responsibility to any person for the decisions and actions taken by that person with respect to any of the information contained in this report.

DECLARATION DATE EXTENDED FOR WILMAR GROWERS

While 28 February has traditionally been the annual pricing Declaration Date for growers using QSL, Wilmar growers remain unable to submit marketing or pricing nominations to QSL for the coming season as there is no OSA in place with Wilmar.

As a result, QSL's traditional 28 February Declaration Date will be extended for Wilmar growers this year.

As soon as QSL secures an OSA with Wilmar, we intend to release details of the new marketing and pricing nomination dates that will apply specifically for Wilmar growers.

These new dates will provide Wilmar growers with adequate time to fully consider and submit their pricing options under new Marketing Choice arrangements.

INTERIM PRICING – WILMAR GROWERS

Wilmar has not discussed its interim pricing arrangements with QSL and so we are unable to provide any information beyond that publicly available regarding the implications for growers who choose to pursue this option with Wilmar.

However, we continue to have grave concerns for growers who would enter into this agreement without full information regarding the potential costs associated with novating any pricing undertaken.

While QSL would do its best to accept novations of forward pricing from Wilmar growers in such an agreement, it can only do so when there is an OSA to transition the pricing to.

There may also be costs associated with these kinds of transfers, which the relevant grower could be wholly liable for (these costs would vary on a case-by-case basis). Pricing may also need to be in an appropriate pricing ratio format to minimise any potential costs.

We strongly urge any Wilmar growers considering interim pricing options to make sure they understand the terms of any such agreement, the costs involved, and what it locks them into. ■



USING NATURAL REMEDIES TO IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH

By Wayne Griffin

Burdekin cane, cattle and mixed crop farmer Gary Spotswood is one of an increasing number of innovative growers harnessing mother nature to improve soil health and boost environmental outcomes.



Pictured: Burdekin grower Gary Spotswood with son Daniel, 18, who is completing an on-farm apprenticeship as part of his Cert 3 in Ag. (Above) Gary uses mixed fallow crops of sun hemp, sunflower, sorghum and dolichos bean. Opposite page: (Top) Feed stock used for mixed fallow; (Bottom) In addition to bio-fertilisers, beneficial fungi are harvested from the farm and grown in drums before being returned to the soil.



When third generation Burdekin grower Gary Spotswood decided to give organic farming a go, it was mainly a commercial exercise.

A contact in the Melbourne vegetable market, coupled with a chance to save on input costs, convinced Gary to try his hand at chemical-free horticulture.

However, as he delved deeper and deeper into the world of organics, Gary discovered his attitude to farming and land management undergoing a change.

"I didn't see it coming when I started out, but since I've gotten into the organics I've realised that we're looking at things the wrong way," Gary said.

"We've got to start looking after our soil – it doesn't matter what crop we're growing – look at the soil first and get that right, use that as your starting point."

Today, Gary uses a mix of home-brewed biological fertilisers, mixed-crop fallows, and his certified organic cattle to improve



soil quality on his 450 hectare property at the base of Mt Alma, 15 minutes south of Home Hill.

"We've got about 100-130 ha of cane and 20 ha of horticulture - mainly zucchini, chilli, pumpkin and some watermelon, as well as some leafies like spring onion, parsley and beetroot," Gary said.

"Most of the veggies go south to the markets, with some ending up in the supermarkets, but we also home deliver fresh fruit and veggies boxes locally under the name Mt Alma Fresh Organics.

"All of the veggies are completely organic and we also have about 20 ha of organic cane, although that's because the land was certified, not because we particularly wanted organic cane."

Gary's 200 head of cattle have proved to be an integral part of the farm's soil health system, not only munching fallow crops and returning nutrients to the soil, but also providing the base ingredients to produce the bio-fertilisers.

"Everyone wants to grow crop after crop, after crop, to get a monetary return, but we need to have that sacrificial crop every year or two," Gary said.

Instead of just ploughing those fallow crops back into the ground as many growers do, Gary uses his cattle as 100% natural mulching machines.

"Originally the cattle were just a sideline, they'd graze on the areas that we weren't farming on, but these days we look at them a bit differently, they're my tools that come in and do the mulching.

"We're growing multi-species fallow crops - sun hemp, sunflower, sorghum, dolichos bean - a variety of food, not just for the cattle, but for the soil.

"And we're getting value on both ends - the cattle are eating this great mix, putting on kilos, but they're also working as a mulcher putting nutrients back into the soil.

Continues page 16...





"You might think there's nothing left behind, but they're putting all that urine and manure back into that paddock. And all that grass and food won't be fully digested either, a lot of it will pass straight through them and be put back into the soil."

Once or twice a year Gary kills a cow and uses the contents of its gut as a starter for his bio-fertiliser brew.

"We take all that biology in the gut, all those microbes, and use them to make a batch of organic bio-fertiliser, much like the way you would brew beer using yeast and sugar.

"We feed the microbes what they like to eat and they multiply, then we put all that beneficial biology back into the soil."

While Gary still uses commercial fertilisers on most of his cane, the addition of bio-fertilisers has allowed him to significantly reduce nitrogen inputs.

"I've reduced my nitrogen by 30 or 40 units, just as a trial, and so far the results have been impressive. Last year's crop yielded the same as the previous year, before we reduced the N."

In fact, Gary has been so impressed with his experience of organic farming that he would encourage other growers to give it a go.

"Obviously every farm is different and what works on one farm might not work on another, but overall I've found the whole experience to be positive," he said.

"There's probably not much benefit in growing organic cane at the minute, as the mills won't accept it as organic, but putting good soil health practices into action will be beneficial to any farm, no matter what crop you're growing.

"Also, with organic farming you can't just go for the easy fix. If you're having problems with yield or pests or whatever, you can't just go to town and buy a spray or a fertiliser, because you'll lose your certification.

"You have to identify the problem then work out a solution. Sometimes that just means you have to suck it and see, and learn from your mistakes.

"But for me that puts a bit of the interest back into farming."

Pictured: Gary is participating in a NQ Dry Tropics project to regenerate wetlands in the Burdekin Delta.



"In just a couple of years we've seen a really positive change and it just keeps improving. The whole project has really opened my eyes to the possibilities and I'm already starting to think about what we can do next."

WETLAND REGENERATION

It's not only the health of his soil that Gary is committed to improving. He is also participating in a NQ Dry Tropics project to regenerate wetlands in the Burdekin Delta.

With 100 ha of salt marsh and wetlands on his property, Gary has witnessed firsthand the changing face of the delta environment over the last 30 years.

"Years ago these wetlands would completely dry down during the dry period, that was their natural state," Gary said.

"Then when the wet season came they'd fill up and the fish and birds would return.

"But what's happened over the years is, due to the increase in irrigated agriculture, seepage through channel systems and tailwater from drains has led to the wetlands being wet all year round, and not having a chance to dry down at all.

"This basically turned it from a natural salt marsh into a fresh water lagoon and

led to aquatic weeds completely choking out the system.

"The number of wading birds was dropping, as were fish numbers, but at the same time pests like feral pig and coots were thriving and were then going into the surrounding paddocks and damaging the cane."

As part of the regeneration project, Gary installed a recycle pump, which redistributes water from an irrigation spillway before it enters the lagoon.

This has allowed the wetlands to naturally dry down, resulting in a significant die-back of Typha and other invasive weeds and has also seen a resurgence in bird and fish numbers.

He's also dredging invasive water hyacinth, which are clogging up creeks and drains on the property, and composting them to use on crops.

"In just a couple of years we've seen a really positive change and it just keeps improving. The whole project has really opened my eyes to the possibilities and I'm already starting to think about what we can do next." ■

suSCon maxi Intel update

Supplied by Crop Care

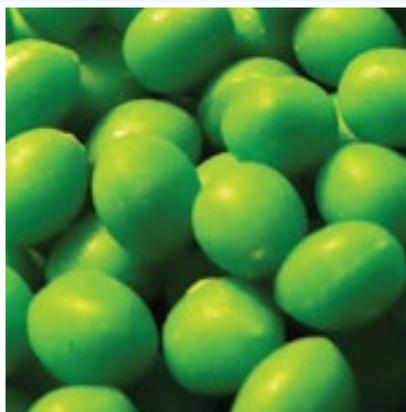
Autumn planting provides cane growers with an invaluable opportunity to simplify canegrub control and management for several years of the crop cycle.

Applying controlled-release suSCon maxi Intel granules to the plant crop provides protection against greyback, negatoria, consobrina and Bundaberg canegrub damage for three years; and Childers and southern one-year canegrub damage for four years.

Crop Care's continued research with SRA is investigating the potential for even longer protection, with positive results from recent trials.

The Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority has recently conducted an overview of issues relating to honeybee health in Australia, with a particular focus on the use of neonicotinoid insecticides, including

imidacloprid – the most widely used insecticide for cane grub control, contained in controlled-release suSCon maxi Intel granules.



The report suggests that Australian honeybee populations are not in decline, despite the increased use of this group of insecticides in agriculture and horticulture since the mid-1990s.

While bees and insects are not considered pollinators of sugarcane, it would significantly impact the cane industry if imidacloprid was lost due to bee issues on other crops or for other reasons.

Crop Care will keep a close watch on the APVMA's assessment on honeybee and insect pollinator health and will update the industry if any new information on imidacloprid comes to hand.

Crop Care marketing manager Chris Ramsey said as an Australian company, Crop Care promoted the careful use of all crop-protection products, including insecticides such as imidacloprid – which it produces in both controlled-release-granular and liquid forms.

He said a two-year study in the Burdekin and Herbert regions (2013-15) had provided important information about retaining imidacloprid in the soil for effective grub control, and minimising losses from cane fields.

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Findings included that rainfall was the main driver of increased losses, compared with imidacloprid runoff from irrigation, with the volume and intensity of rain also strongly influencing the loss of imidacloprid – an important finding for sugar-growing regions with high-intensity rainfall.

"In the field study, due to the controlled-release nature of suSCon maxi Intel, large doses of imidacloprid were not present in the soil at any one time and available for major runoff loss.

"The study provided vital information to the sugarcane industry for continuing development of its environmental credentials and best-practice, efficient cane-growing.

"Crop Care will continue its long-term collaboration with SRA to develop effective and long-term canegrub control."

He said growers could continue to both protect their crops from canegrub damage and retain imidacloprid within their property boundary by:

- Monitoring cane fields for risk of canegrub infection prior to planting and after harvesting. Risk will depend on history of infestation; proximity to fields with damaging canegrub levels; and (in some species) the presence of grubs in the row after harvest.
- Using suSCon maxi Intel to treat the plant crop in at-risk fields. The crop will then be protected against canegrub damage for 3-4 years.
- Applying liquid imidacloprid products to ratoon cane only as required, and strictly according to label directions for canegrub control. ■



Pictured (page 18): suSCon maxi Intel granules; (top-left): Cane grub in pupating chamber; (above): Cane planted in dual rows by disc opener planter, protected for several seasons by suSCon maxi Intel



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GREAT PLAINS TURBO MAX IMPRESSES WITH SPEED, VERSATILITY

Supplied by PFG Australia

Kansas-based Great Plains and PFG Australia, distributor for Great Plains machinery, are running Turbo Max cultivator demonstrations across the country.

Great Plains Export Director Ryan Haffner is in Australia to meet farmers and will also conduct dealer training sessions on Great Plains products.

He said the Turbo Max cultivator with models from 2.5m to 15m is the premier vertical tillage product from the Great Plains line up.

"Great Plains makes the widest range of true vertical tillage tools in the world and the Turbo Max is by far our most popular machine in recent times. It's not hard to have confidence in a product on the back of so many sales all over the US and internationally."

Patented technological advances teamed with practical design make the Turbo Max a highly productive and very adaptable machine.

It has a patented rolling spike harrow, maintenance free bearings in rolling attachments and gangs, and transfer valves adjust the weight from the centre to the wings delivering constant full-width down pressure.

Only with the Turbo Max can the operator hydraulically adjust the blade angle on the go from zero through to 6 degrees to suit changing field conditions.

Ryan Haffner said heavy stubble was not an issue, nor was panning.

"The Turbo Max levels the soil and gives you shallow incorporation of residue creating fissures through which moisture is able to travel in both directions.

"An agronomist told me some of the speed tillers that have been popular here for a while are causing panning. You can avoid panning with the Turbo Max."

Dealers Echuca CIH helped organise a busy demo day at a 30ha site where visiting and local farmers were keen to look into the benefits of Great Plains vertical tillage.

Salesman Bruce Watson said the trial site was sheep-grazed barley stubble on varying soil types from hard clay to lighter loams. The 7.3m Turbo Max cultivator travelled at just over 15km/h.

"We've got four sections: a control zone with zero tillage, a second zone with the Turbo Max at zero degrees, a third zone with the blade angle at 3 degrees and a fourth zone with the angle set to 6 degrees.

"This region with its broadacre cropping is well suited to what the Turbo Max

does best. The farmers I spoke to are impressed with the speed and results in these conditions. Later in the year, they'll be back to check on germination and yields at the site," he said.

PFG Australia's National Sales Manager Justin Fisher explained why the company chose to distribute the Turbo Max.

"Great Plains has been developing agronomically sound machinery for a long time, giving farmers the best conditions for maximum yields.

"Farming communities here and around the world have recognised how Great Plains vertical tillage can encourage moisture retention, optimal root development and plant nutrition. And no hard pan.

"We saw a real need and a desire for change in cultivation practices here.

"You don't get the extra workers on farms anymore. Farmers need a machine that's fast enough and versatile enough to give them one pass high productivity. They want good soils and great yields.

"That's why we chose the Turbo Max." ■

CANE GROWERS' HEARTS IN THE RIGHT PLACE!

While many were celebrating Valentine's Day, Maroochy River cane farmers **Murray** and **Gordon Oakes**, together with neighbours **Garry** and **Paul Petersen**, kindly opened their hearts to welcome a group of Year 11 and 12 high school students to their cane farm—all in the name of education.



And the love didn't stop there—representatives from MSF's Maryborough Mill were on hand to answer questions about the milling process. We thank **Chris Coutts-Smith** and **Dannielle Nitschinsk** for generously donating their time to travel and assist. Plus, a big note of thanks to CANEGROWERS Maryborough Manager, **Cameron Waterson**, for organising and coordinating the many stakeholders to make it happen.

Visiting from Caboolture SHS, the agricultural students were keen to check out the cane fields and the machinery shed. Lots of questions were asked and answered; and everyone had a lot of fun. At the end of the visit, the students showed their appreciation gifting jars of Macadamia nuts they had grown, picked, and shelled on their own school farm.

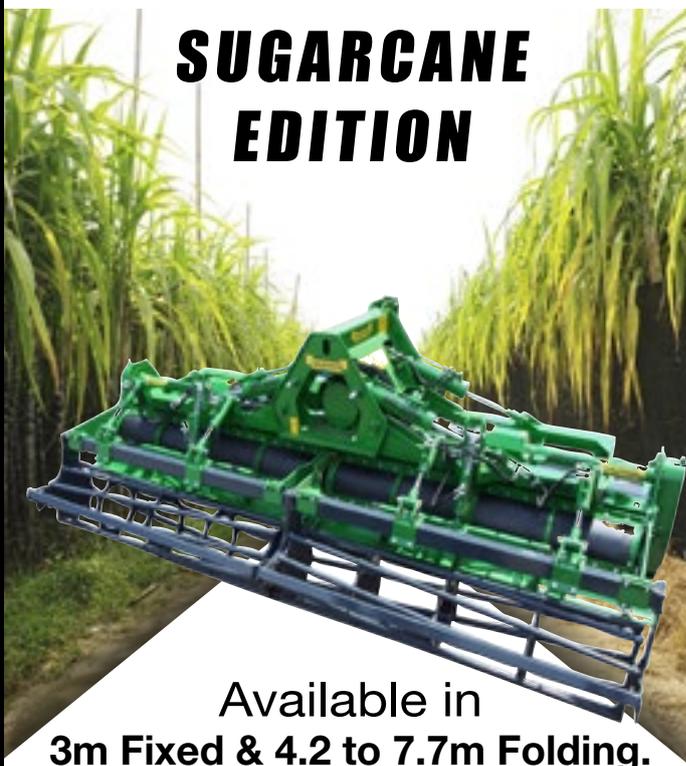
We hope the students enjoyed their experience and its contribution to their studies. We also appreciate the generosity of our members and affiliates, sharing their time and knowledge with the next generation of Australian farm workers. *How sweet!* ♥



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3 Row Stool Splitter S/S Fertilizer box. 2 tonne plus trailerable. Ph. 0407 650 684

WANTED TO BUY: 1.5 to 2.5 tonne Stool Splitter. Phone Tony: 0427 327 279

Wanted, 2 or 4 tyne ripper Ph. 0407131726

STL shares - buy at market. Call Elton 0408448227

Wanted RHC Southern Cross pump impeller in good condition. Ph. 0428 368 923

Wanted to buy: 66 40 Ford New Holland 2-wheel-drive with a cab. Ph. 07 4959 1451

Wanted to buy: 2,000L fuel tanker on wheels. Ph. 4777 3154 AH

CANE WANTED for 2017 and subsequent seasons. Tully area. Shawn Ph. 0418782815

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

Wanted to buy. Second hand pineapple planter. Ph. 4776 1386

iFIT ENGINEERING

29 Richardson St TULLY

CHOPPER DRUMS

- Clean efficient cutting with minimal losses
- Use 95mm blades
- Heavy duty
- Not prone to crossing over
- Proven conventional clamping (Bisalloy clamp bars optional)
- Good blade life
- Thrower mounting bars standard on 4, 6 and 8 blade drums (Optional on ten blade)
- Available in 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 blade, 15" and 12" to suit Case and John Deere harvesters
- Very competitively priced

EXTERNAL CHOPPER ADJUSTERS

Maximize your chopper performance and blade life with our chopper adjusters.

- Very easy to use
- Proven over the last three seasons in a wide variety of conditions
- Available to suit Case and John Deere harvesters

CHOPPER IDLE BEARING FOR JOHN DEERE HARVESTERS

Our bearing modification kit uses an economical spherical roller bearing in a housing that allows end float when the machine flexes.

CHOPPER DRUM RECONDITIONING AND MODIFICATIONS

We modify existing drums to provide similar cutting geometry to our new drums for improved cutting, and add gusseting for extra strength.

For further information on these and other products and services, contact **Ian or Brenton Fagg**.

Ph **4068 2811** or **0408 199 309**

E: admin@ifitengineering.com.au

www.ifitengineering.com.au

Rainfall Report

brought to you by AustSafe Super

Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)		Year to date	Average rainfall (mm) January–February
	7 days to 9am	20.02.17		
	13.02.17	20.02.17		
Mossman	63	53	1134	918
Mareeba AP	2	12	394	444
Cairns	29	18	752	835
Mt Sophia	54	127	1302	1165
Babinda	0	112	820	1368
Innisfail	71	66	1383	1100
Tully	110	92	952	1336
Cardwell	122	107	730	902
Lucinda	72	30	655	846
Ingham	31	73	523	827
Abergowrie	79	10	345	718
Townsville	1	56	283	566
Ayr DPI	4	57	323	445
Proserpine	7	15	659	645
Mirani	14	68	571	652
Mackay	23	116	695	598
Sarina (Plane Ck)	42	114	940	749
Bundaberg	1	0.2	66	330
Childers South	10	0.2	56	250
Maryborough	4	0	26	338
Tewantin	21	4	103	453
Eumundi	25	10	132	474
Nambour	15	37	140	489
Woongoolba	30	15	71	330
Murwillumbah	28	13	245	428
Ballina	6	4	103	377
Woodburn	4	9	186	306



AustSafe Super



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.

Positions Vacant

Experienced cane harvester operator; 7700 full track; 2017 crushing season. Upper Pioneer Valley area; must have mechanical knowledge and hill experience. 30,000t plus. Apply in writing: PO Box 31 FINCH HATTON QLD 4756. More information: 0419 260 879

A Northern NSW Harvesting Co-Op is seeking a Manager/Harvester driver for the 2017 season and into the future. Mechanical experience is essential. Ph Jim 0416086227 or Ben 0402421565

WESTCOTT ENGINEERING

HARVESTER BLADE RESHARPENING

Various sized resharpened harvester blades for sale

Tungsten Hardfacing

- EXCAVATOR TEETH
- BUCKET TEETH
- RIPPER POINTS
- BASECUTTER BLADES
- BASECUTTER DISKS
(BUILT-UP, REPAIRED AND HARD FACED)
- HARVESTER SHOES
(BUILT-UP, REPAIRED AND HARD FACED)
- FAN HARD FACING & BALANCING

Phone Brendon 0428 220 789
20 Westcott Rd, Homebush, QLD 4737

WANT MORE NEWS, VIEWS & PHOTOS?

Find *CANEGROWERS* on Facebook!



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Sugarcane harvester and bin driver required for Condong Mill area. Machinery, maintenance and management skills required. Position for 2017 season and beyond, with prospect of full-time Harvester Operator position. Ph Bernard 0428 298 618.

Work Wanted

Seeking for haul out work 2017 season, HC R & UD licence, forklift licence, four years cane experience, reliable, willing to put in long hours. any North Queensland, Kev 0417648842

Looking for Haul out work in Mareeba for the 2017 season or any tractor driving jobs. Hr license. Heaps of tractor experience. Managed a paw paw farm. Very hard worker. Very reliable. Young and fit. 0476407636 swemmert@yahoo.com.au

Looking for work in the Mackay area. I have sound knowledge of cane farming and operating machinery. Casual work is ok. Phone David Dahms on 0428387600

Property

Wanted to lease. Cane farm land Balnagowan/ Dumbleton area. With or without equipment. Ph 0428598688

INGHAM: Cane Farm for sale. Hawkins Creek. Total area 48.3ha. CPA 46.6ha. Shed, electricity & water. Genuine enquiries Ph. 0407635175.

Wanted to Lease: Cane farm in Bundaberg District. Phone 0429 026 690.



Spotted anything unusual?

NOTHING WILL PROTECT YOUR CROP BETTER THAN A GOOD HARD LOOK

Growers have an important role in keeping watch for exotic pests, diseases and weeds that could devastate the Australian sugarcane industry.

Early detection and reporting is the key to protecting farms, industries and the communities that rely on them. Every moment lost harms our chance of successful eradication.

If you spot anything unusual in your crop please call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. The call is free (except from mobiles).

Visit phau.com.au/industries/sugarcane for further information and a list of the top priority cane pests.



Look, be alert, call an expert