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FEATURES

5 Reef regs \$1.3 billion cost to Queensland

An economic analysis of the impact of reef regulations has revealed a \$1.3 billion hit to Queensland's economy.

16 No quick fix to nutrient loss

Mackay grower Lindsay Neilsen is diversifying and redefining his approach to soil health and nutrient management.

24 Grower-focused extension drives practice change

Wet Tropics cane growers have embraced practice change with the help of extension officers in a Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership program.

30 In the clear

The industry-led Smartcane BMP program has been given 'recognised' status by the Queensland Government, meaning accredited growers will not be targeted by reef reg auditors.

COVER IMAGE: Gordonvale grower David Wah Day has been making big changes on his small farm in recent years. Read more on page 25.

CONTENTS IMAGE: Mackay grower Lindsay Neilsen is redefining his approach to soil health and nutrients. Read more on page 16.



EVERY ISSUE

- 4 News briefs
- 10 CEO comment
- 14 From the Chair
- 20 QSL report
- 34 Regional round-up
- 40 Policy updates
- 44 Legal update
- 46 Membership update
- 47 Classifieds
- 48 Rainfall report



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Second cane train collision

Wilmar is calling on harvesting crews to be more vigilant around train lines following a second collision between a harvester and cane train in less than a month.

The latest incident occurred on 26 July at Toobanna, south of Ingham.

The harvester was turning at the end of a drill when the machine's elevator clipped the cabin of an oncoming locomotive, Wilmar general manager of cane supply and grower relations **Paul Giordani** said.

It was the second such incident in weeks, with a more serious collision occurring on 8 July when an 18-tonne locomotive was seriously damaged near Victoria Mill.

"There was a collision earlier this month when a harvester crossed a cane railway track in front of an oncoming train," Mr Giordani told local media.



"No one was injured, but there was significant damage to both the loco and the harvester.

"We are talking with all harvesting groups in the Herbert to ensure safety protocols around cane rail tracks continue to be front of mind," he said. ■

Virtual success

Social distancing was the order of the day when CANEGROWERS Policy Council members gathered for their mid-year meeting in July.

For the first time in the organisation's history, grower representatives gathered at a number of regional hubs to 'dial-in' for a virtual video meeting, rather than traveling to Brisbane for face-to-face talks.

"COVID-19 restrictions have meant we've had to adapt and do a lot of things differently in 2020," CANEGROWERS CEO **Dan Galligan** said.

"While face-to-face meetings are always our preference, growers on this occasions were able to meet in small local groups and these hubs discussed critical industry strategy and policy.

"All our district representatives are growers, and while they are all busy with harvest they've embraced video conferencing technology as a way to ensure we still fulfill our functions and our very first virtual Policy Council meeting was a great success."

The Council discussed a number of current and emerging issues challenging the industry, such as reef regulations, water and electricity prices, and depressed world sugar prices.

They also mapped out CANEGROWERS' strategy heading into the upcoming State election.

"The Council also spent time on a strategy for the next 5-10 years and provided insight into how CANEGROWERS needs to be shaped to meet grower needs," Mr Galligan said.

The July QCGO Board meeting was also held via video conference, as was a series of 13 district board meetings held over the past three months. ■

Pictured: CANEGROWERS Policy Council virtual video meeting.



Analysis reveals \$1.3b cost of Reef regs

A CANEGROWERS analysis has shown the State Government risks an economic hit to Queensland of \$1.3 billion over ten years with its misguided push to cut nitrogen applications on cane crops by up to 30% below industry best practice levels.

"We are doing all we can to reduce the risk to the Great Barrier Reef from runoff from our farms, including adopting a scientifically-based industry program, SIX EASY STEPS (6ES), to analyse soil and crop needs and determine optimal fertiliser rates for productivity," CANEGROWERS Chairman **Paul Schembri** said.

"But there is a zealous campaign within government agencies and programs to drive nitrogen use below these guidelines without recognising the huge economic risk to growers and the regional economies that rely on them.

"The ramped-up reef regulations implemented last year are based on the lie that such a cut would not hurt the industry – our analysis shows this is clearly false. These 2019 reef regulations must be repealed."

CANEGROWERS has used a large dataset derived from field trials of crop fertiliser responses to assess what would happen at different rates of nitrogen application. The economic impact was then analysed.

A 30% reduction on 6ES levels of nitrogen would lead to significant and dire impacts on the sugar industry:

- A drop in crop production of 5 - 7.5 tonnes of sugarcane per hectare per year.
- An annual loss of 2.3 million tonnes of sugarcane across the Queensland industry.

- A loss of \$110 million in earnings per year for cane growers and sugar millers.
- Processing capacity equivalent to two sugar mills becoming redundant.

"It is time to put the brakes on this regulatory juggernaut and the false assumptions on which it and other reef programs and projects are based," Mr Schembri said.

"Even driving catchment water quality back to pre-development levels, with everyone going broke in the process, would have a limited impact on the Great Barrier Reef as a whole because inshore areas account for 5% or less of the coral reef area.

"The importance of nitrogen in water for coral on the Reef has been greatly exaggerated in government policy when scientists tell us that the main stressors on the Reef are climate change and extreme weather events.

"Our industry is being sacrificed for political expediency, to make it look like action is being taken to improve the prospects for the Reef's future."

While this assessment is alarming, it represents just one consequence of the systemic problems with government policy for the Great Barrier Reef. Read more about this in the Policy Update from **Mick Quirk**, CANEGROWERS Environment and Sustainability Manager on page 41.

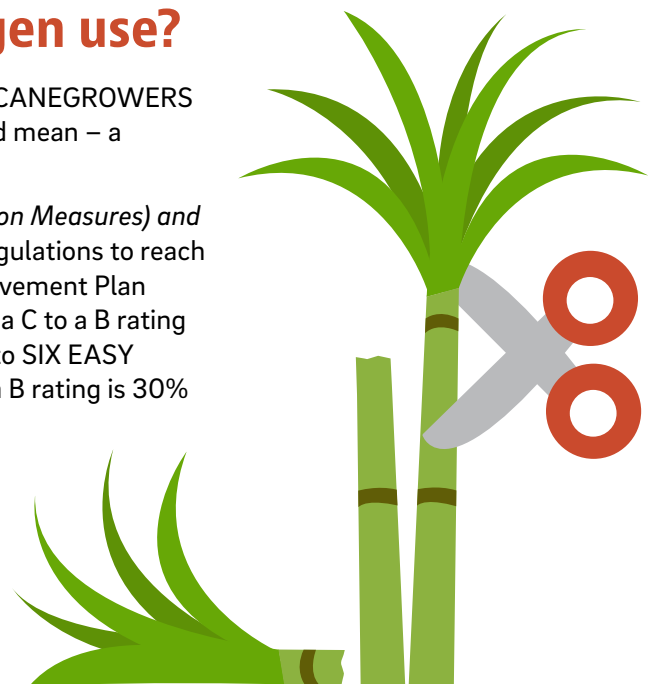
Why analyse a 30% cut to nitrogen use?

The Queensland Government responded to the report claiming CANEGROWERS is exaggerating the situation by analysing what a 30% cut would mean – a criticism CANEGROWERS rejects.

Last year's *Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Act* requires the Minister to set regulations to reach water quality targets set by the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022. Put simply, these targets are to move growers from a C to a B rating on the scale used in Reef Report Cards. A C rating is equivalent to SIX EASY STEPS (industry best practice for nutrient management) while a B rating is 30% below that.

While mandatory reductions in nitrogen use are not in the current regulations (thanks to the advocacy work of CANEGROWERS), the Act states that the government must review and change the regulations to meet the reef targets.

So CANEGROWERS is not exaggerating when saying that a 30% reduction is the underlying intent of the regulations. ■



Grower voices loud and clear at reef regs inquiry

Flaws and failings in government policy targeting farmers over water quality for the Great Barrier Reef have been outlined by CANEGROWERS representatives at an inquiry in Brisbane.

Set up in September last year, the Senate Committee inquiry is to examine the evidence base used to regulate farm practices and then report by 1 October 2020.

Two days of hearings were scheduled in July (after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of earlier hearings planned for Cairns and Townsville) and a range of agricultural, science and environmental groups appeared.

At the heart of CANEGROWERS is the belief in growers representing growers and this was clearly in evidence at the public hearings.

Eight CANEGROWERS districts (Cairns Region, Tully, Innisfail, Herbert River, Burdekin, Proserpine, Mackay and Bundaberg) were represented either by growers and staff travelling to Brisbane or joining on a telephone link.

CANEGROWERS Chairman **Paul Schembri** summed up the link between science and policy for the Senators.

"There needs to be quality of the reef science because, after all, that science has been the basis of the ongoing bureaucratic regulations that sugarcane farmers are facing," Mr Schembri said. "If it's wrong, we now know from our economic assessment that it will whack us in a very significant way."

CANEGROWERS made four key recommendations to the inquiry:

- Remove the regulatory burden on growers and adopt long-term support for on-farm innovation;
- Restore growers' confidence in policy through a review of the way the science used to justify it is managed and scrutinised;
- Ensure water quality targets are credible and realistic; and
- Develop trustworthy methods for evaluating improvements in farm practices and water quality (including a review of the Paddock to Reef program).

The final point prompted questioning from Senators as they tried to understand what is a major issue for industry and flaw in the government assessment of agriculture in relation to water quality policy – the under-reporting of grower adoption of best practice farming practices.

CANEGROWERS outlined the difference between the out-dated and incomplete data quoted by scientists and government from

Reef Report Cards (that only 9% of cane area is farmed under best practice) and the industry's Smartcane BMP program which has more than 30% of cane area accredited, rising to more than 50% in the Wet Tropics region.

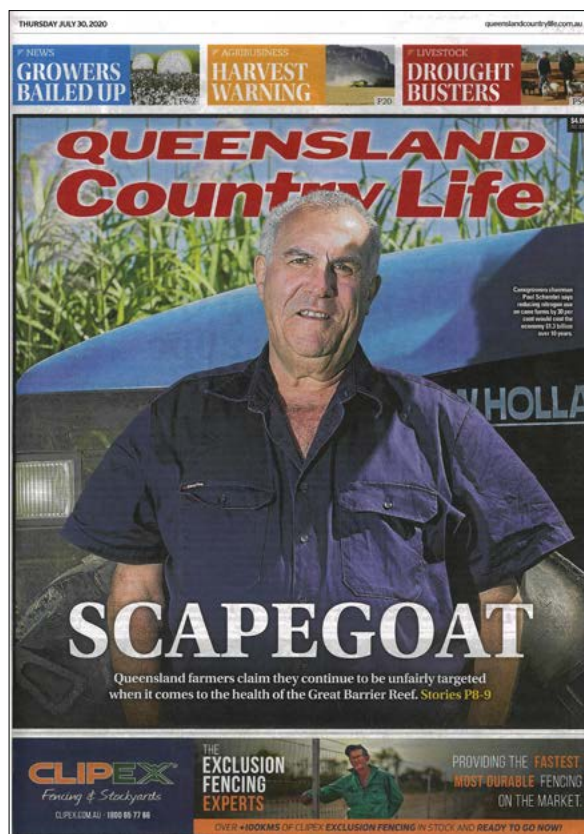
A claimed lack of progress towards best practice farming was cited by the Queensland Government in 2019 when it ramped up its reef regulations, a point CANEGROWERS was able to demonstrate was invalid.

The CANEGROWERS assessment of the huge \$1.3 billion economic impact of the underlying intent of the regulations, to drive down nitrogen use within the sugarcane industry, was also explained to the Senators as was the ongoing commitment of growers to participate in collaborative programs, projects and research around farm practices and water quality.

"One of the things farmers have been demanding in the reef debate is transparency so I think the Senate inquiry has been helpful to us in advancing this," Mr Schembri said after appearing.

Full transcripts of the two days of hearings are being prepared and will be available from the Parliamentary Business section of the Parliament of Australia website. ■

Pictured: (below left) CANEGROWERS representatives from Innisfail, Mackay and Bundaberg addressing the Senate Committee and (below right) CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri in Queensland Country Life.



Water prices central to LNP's election pitch to growers

The Liberal National Party has fired an opening salvo in the Queensland election campaign to win the votes of cane-growing communities, vowing to slash the cost of irrigation water for farmers by 20%.

Party leader **Deb Frecklington** announced the price cuts, which would come into effect from 1 July 2021 should the LNP win government, during a whistle-stop tour of the Burdekin on 27 July.

Ms Frecklington also committed to implementing the Queensland Competition Authority's recommendations on overhauling SunWater to deliver further savings for growers.

Under the plan, SunWater would move to a regulated asset-based (RAB) approach for financing asset renewals, meaning growers would incur an annual cost for assets instead of an estimated replacement cost of an asset at the end of its life.

"The QCA has modelled this at a saving of \$15 million, which is what we will pass

on directly to these growers, so there is no cost to the Queensland taxpayers," Ms Frecklington said.

"Water means jobs, water means growth and water means a strong economy for Queensland."

CANEGROWERS has welcomed the move, with CEO **Dan Galligan** saying high irrigation costs were negatively impacting yield and profitability in the industry.

"With more than 65% of our \$2.5 billion sugarcane crop in Queensland reliant on irrigation, water and electricity costs are huge issues for profitability in our industry," Mr Galligan said.

"Prohibitive costs mean growers are often forced to irrigate less than would be ideal and that has negative consequences for crop productivity.

"A water price reduction of 20% would have an immediate and positive impact on our ability to deliver an economic boost to regional economies through increased cane production and grower profitability.

"Making water more affordable for farmers will see benefits flowing throughout regional communities."

In a teleconference with grower representatives in late-July, LNP Shadow Minister for Agriculture **Tony Perrett** gave CANEGROWERS a commitment that dam safety upgrade costs would not be passed on to irrigators as part of the price they pay.

"I can safely say now that those dam safety costs will not be included in the final price determination under our government," Mr Perrett said. ■

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Covert data plan 'withdrawn'

The Queensland Government has back-pedalled on a farm data harvesting plan after CANEGROWERS shone a light on it.

The Department of Environment and Science had listed a tender online seeking a private contractor to collate information on farmers and farms in Great Barrier Reef catchment regions.

The tender document, *DES19406 - Identify existing information sources for Agricultural Producers in the Great Barrier Reef Catchment*, said the aim of the project was to provide information for a spatial database of producers for the purpose of reef regulation compliance activities.

"We were alarmed that this outsourcing exercise would have put at risk the privacy of our members' personal information as defined under privacy law."

CANEGROWERS wrote to the Minister, **Leeanne Enoch**, about the tender and raised the issue publicly. Within hours of media stories being published, the Department told journalists the

tender was being withdrawn as part of budget savings to reduce the use of external contractors.

"We were alarmed that this outsourcing exercise would have put at risk the privacy of our members' personal information as defined under privacy law," CANEGROWERS CEO **Dan Galligan** said. "Information they have provided in good faith for one particular program or project could have been collated, compiled and used for a completely different purpose by the Government."

Last year CANEGROWERS was outspoken about a dangerous clause in the reef legislation that went through parliament – giving the government power to acquire, from anyone who works with or for farmers, records about farm businesses.

Concerned that this tender was the State Government's first step towards wielding that power, and with the tender still listed online albeit with its status as 'withdrawn', CANEGROWERS will remain vigilant. ■

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Heavy downpours hamper harvest

Harvesting operations came to a soggy standstill in many cane-growing regions during July, as persistent rainfall temporarily put the skids on crushing operations from Cairns to the Sunshine Coast.

In far north Queensland, the Tully, Innisfail and Babinda regions were particularly badly impacted, with up to 150mm in some areas topping up the already saturated paddocks.

Tully, which received over 220mm in June, took another 144 mm in July, while Babinda received 152mm during the month.

Innisfail, which received the highest monthly rainfall of any cane-growing district in June with 253mm, took another drenching in July, with harvesting crews chalking up over 240 hours to wet weather already this season.

"Rain is nothing new to us around here, but having said that, we've probably lost a little bit more time than we normally would for this stage of the season," CANEGROWERS Innisfail Chairman **Joe Marano** said. "Luckily the mill is performing well at the minute, so when we do get a window of a few good days to harvest, we can go hard."

While Mr Marano isn't too concerned about the impact wet weather is having on this year's crush, it's the 2021 crop that is worrying him.

"Planting operations right across the district have been pretty severely impacted over the past couple of months, that's

probably our main issue, because every week delay to planting is a week of growing time we lose.

"When the rain is persistent, like it has been, those weeks start to add up and can potentially have a serious impact on next year's crop."

CANEGROWERS Tully Chairman **Jamie Dore** said growers will struggle to catch up with farming operations delayed due to wet weather.

"All credit to the harvesting crews, they've been doing a great job getting the crop off despite the weather," Mr Dore said. "The main problem with the continual rain is that growers are having to put off pretty much all their in-field farming operations."

"Not just planting, but also fertilising and spraying. Operations that are normally spread out over three or four months will now have to be compressed into a month or two. Managing that compressed workload is going to be very tough for many growers."

Full monthly rainfall figures are in the Sunsuper Rainfall report on page 48. ■

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CEO COMMENT

By Dan Galligan, CEO CANEGROWERS

AN ELECTION LIKE NO OTHER

With this year's State election less than three months away, political parties are busy strategising how best to approach a campaign that, for the first time, has not only a fixed election date, but a fixed term for the incoming government.

As the battle to win government begins to heat up, it's important to remember the state of play in Queensland's parliament as it stands now.

At the 2017 election, Labor won 48 of the 92 seats on offer to claim majority government. This left the LNP with 39 seats, Katter's Australian Parter (KAP) with three seats, One Nation and the Greens with one seat each and one Independent.

In fact, Labor has won all but one Queensland election since 1989, and has only been out of government for five years in that time.

It lost its majority in 1996, giving way to a Coalition minority government that was defeated in 1998. Then, in 2012, Labor suffered the worst electoral defeat of a sitting government in the State's history, claiming just seven seats to the Campbell Newman-led LNP's 78.

However, Labor's time in opposition was short-lived. The Newman Government dropped 34 seats at the 2015 election to hand the reins of power back.

Despite the lop-sided nature of political victories in recent years, the 2020 State election is shaping up to be a tight contest.

A recent Newscorp poll (from June) suggests Labor's primary vote has slipped from 35% at the 2017 election to 32%. Meanwhile, the LNP's primary vote has risen from 33.7 to 38%.

The poll found the potential for a 3.2% swing to the LNP, which now leads Labor 52% to 48% on a two-party-preferred basis. Interestingly, this is almost the same lead the LNP held in polls prior to the 2017 election.

Tight polls, a set election date and a fixed term in government means that parties are actively positioning now - clearly testing the water ahead of their more focused campaigns.

The LNP has been travelling throughout the regions meeting with growers in many CANEGROWERS districts, discussing ideas and most importantly starting to release policy positions.

Equally, the so-called minor parties are actively seeking to carve out a potential future position in the event of a hung parliament, which is a highly plausible outcome.

From government, it is pretty clear Labor has not yet hit full campaign mode, but the party is certainly positioning itself.

Timing is crucial in election campaigns and is often a mixture of trying to ensure maximum policy impact, while also trying to judge the financial resources of both your party and your opponents.

While most of the political commentary is just that, commentary and speculation, the point remains that if recent polls are reflected in voting patterns on election day, it would put up to nine Labor seats in danger and very likely lead to a change of government.

The most important thing to understand from a CANEGROWERS perspective is that up to half a dozen of those seats are regionally-based and influenced by sugarcane and wider agricultural issues.

Our industry voice can and will influence the outcome of this election. CANEGROWERS is well advanced in ensuring that our industry priorities are front and centre in the minds of politicians who are willing and capable of leading our State for the next four years.

That process started immediately after the last election.

The campaign provides an opportunity to bring these issues into stark relief. We don't need to pick a side, because we pick a policy and CANEGROWERS will provide an opportunity to engage with any party which can articulate supportive policies to help us drive a positive future for our industry. ■





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Applications are open for SRA's Sugar Industry Research Awards and Sugar Industry Postgraduate Scholarships. Both programs encourage innovative research ideas and aim to enhance the capability of the research sector that supports the Australian sugarcane industry.

The Postgraduate Research Scholarships program is aimed at Masters or PhD level researchers and is open for applications until October 31, 2020.

The Research Awards program is aimed at existing researchers looking to develop research skills or explore new and innovative ideas. This program is open for applications until October 1, 2020.

"These programs are intended to encourage innovative thinking and allow participants to conduct projects that can demonstrate benefits to the Australian sugarcane industry," General Manager of the SRA Research Funding Unit, Dr Harjeet Khanna, said.

"Through the Research Awards, projects may be used to develop research skills or explore new and innovative ideas. Not every idea or concept leads to success, but the objective of this scheme is to help provide a catalyst that could result in great potential R&D opportunities.

"We encourage existing or prospective sugarcane industry researchers to apply for these excellent opportunities to advance their career."

For more detail visit the Research Investment section of www.sugarresearch.com.au ■



Changes to quad bike safety rules coming in October

Of the 145 quad bike-related deaths recorded in Australia since 2011, 109 have been on farms, according to figures released by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in July.

The statistics, contained in the ACCC's *Quad bike safety standard factsheet*, make for grim reading.

According to the figures, six people report to emergency departments across Australia every day as a result of quad bike-related injuries, with two requiring hospitalization.

Worse still, more than 20 children have died in quad bike accidents since 2011, with the majority of all deaths caused by rollovers.

"The majority of fatalities and serious injuries occur when the quad bike rolls over, and without an operator protection device (OPD), people are pinned underneath the bike," the factsheet states.

"Over half of quad bike deaths in the workplace and one third of deaths during recreational activities are caused by crush injuries or asphyxiation.

"Seventy percent of those killed since 2011 have been older than 30 years of age. This suggests that the majority were likely to be experienced riders who made a single bad decision, and due to the inherent unsafe nature of quad bikes, suffered tragic consequences."

The factsheet was released to address consumer concerns after some quad bike manufacturers indicated they will cease to supply quad bikes to the Australia market once the quad bike safety standard becomes mandatory from October.

The new safety standard will be introduced in two stages.

STAGE 1: 11 OCTOBER 2020

The first stage, which commences on 11 October 2020, requires that all new and directly imported second-hand quad bikes:

- Meet the specified requirements of the US quad bike Standard, ANSI/SVIA 1-2017 or the EN 15997:2011 Standard.
- Be tested for lateral static stability using a tilt table test and display the angle at which they tip onto two wheels on a hang tag at the point of sale
- Have a durable label affixed, visible and legible when the quad bike is in operation, alerting the operator to the risk of rollover, and must include rollover safety information in the owner's manual.

STAGE 2: 11 OCTOBER 2021

The second more contentious stage, which comes into effect on 11 October 2021, requires that all quad bikes:

- Be fitted with, or have integrated into the design, an operator protection device.
- Meet the minimum stability requirements of:
 - Lateral stability—must not tip on to two wheels on a slope less than 28.81 degrees.
 - Front and rear longitudinal pitch stability—must not tip on to two wheels on a slope less than 38.65 degrees.

The full factsheet can be downloaded from: www.productsafety.gov.au/publication/quad-bike-safety-standard-fact-sheet ■

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Queensland's premier liquid fertiliser company LiqueForce will hold a demonstration afternoon south of Mackay to showcase their 5-row subsurface liquid applicator and range of liquid fertiliser products to local cane growers.

The LiqueForce demo afternoon will be hosted by local growers the Zammit family at their farm at Bakers Creek, on Thursday the 6th of August from 3pm to 5pm with refreshments provided.

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FROM THE CHAIR

By Paul Schembri, Chairman CANEGROWERS

The debate about the regulation of farmers in the Great Barrier Reef catchment is often focused on the quality of the science used to underpin government policy and while that is vitally important, it is also critical to highlight how much the reef regulations could cost growers and the economy.

CANEGROWERS has produced a report which assesses the economic impacts should the intent of the new regulations be fully realised. It identified a hit to the Queensland economy of \$1.3 billion over ten years from reduced sugar industry revenue.

The assessment was in two components. The first was to measure the crop yield impacts of lower nitrogen rates and the secondly was to calculate the impacts on regional communities of reduced sugar industry revenue caused by the drop in production that would occur.

The objective of regulations is to ultimately reduce nitrogen rates by between 15 and 30%. Standard yield response modelling indicates that nitrogen reduction will translate to reduced yield of 5 to 7.5 tonnes of cane per hectare and that equates to around 2 million tonnes of cane that wouldn't go through the rollers of a sugar mill each year. This represents a loss of annual potential revenue for growers and millers of around \$100 million.

CANEGROWERS engaged Queensland Economic Advocacy Services (QEAS), a Brisbane-based consultancy, to model the impacts of this reduced sugar industry revenue on regional economies.

Effectively taking the core lost industry revenue of \$110 million, QEAS determined that the lost economic activity to regions is around \$160 million on an annual basis. So our tally of a hit to

the Queensland economy of \$1.3 billion over ten years is quite conservative.

Importantly, the report also shows that Government's idea of best practice for cane (A and B categories in Paddock to Reef) would send the industry broke.

We now hope that governments and other stakeholder groups will have a good look at the report. We obviously accept that some will dismiss it but we want there to be a debate over whether building a bureaucratic baseball bat to regulate farmers is sound government policy. Clearly it shows that if you injure the economic capacity of farmers – you also injure regional economic wellbeing.

CANEGROWERS was very well represented recently at the Senate inquiry into the evidence for reef regulations. Many of our district offices made their way to Brisbane to deliver their message on behalf of growers, while others did so by telephone link.

We had some powerful messages to deliver and points to clarify.

Firstly, we supported any moves to create stronger processes of validating the quality of the science that has been the basis of ongoing bureaucratic regulation of our cane industry.

Secondly, we called for a review of the way in which farmers are assessed for adopting best practice. The last Reef Report Card claimed that only 9% of the cane area had

adopted best management practices.

That is a blatant misrepresentation of where farmers are at! Under Smartcane BMP more than 30% of the area is accredited. This misrepresentation of our efforts is why farmers are dialing out of the debate.

Thirdly, as the CANEGROWERS assessment has shown, winding back the level of nitrogen we can apply to our crop ends up not only whacking the sugar industry but the whole Queensland economy as well.

I know many cane farmers are frustrated with the issues around reef regulations. Many growers have said to me that we need to move on and operate under these regulations. I understand that but every time we have moved on in the past, government has moved the goalposts and set the bars even higher.

We need sensible environmental laws that allow our industry to grow and develop without damaging the Great Barrier Reef. As the clever country, surely we can get the balance right between the environmental sustainability of the Reef and sustainability of agriculture. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P.A. Schembri".

SHOW HOW YOU GROW

**Let's prove
Aussie cane's the
best in the world.**

Smartcane BMP ensures your
great work gets the recognition
it deserves.



Glenn, Proserpine



Contact your district facilitator to find out more.



No quick fix to nutrient loss

As CANEGROWERS' EEF60 enhanced efficiency fertiliser trial draws to a close, a fresh perspective is emerging of young, progressive cane growers eager to trial new approaches to nutrient management.

Whether or not slow-release EEFs prove to be the answer to reducing nutrient loss, the expansive three-year trial has growers such as Mackay's Lindsay Neilsen redefining their approach to soil health and nutrients.

BY JOHN FLYNN

The enthusiasm was obvious as Mackay Area Productivity Services Senior Extension Agronomist David McCallum walked the rows of a recently-prepared block on Lindsay Neilsen's farm at Septimus in the scenic hinterland west of Mackay.

Clutching a clump of sandy soil in his fist, the fresh smatterings of mill mud and lime oozing from his fingers were all the evidence a veteran dirt doctor needed to know that this grower was doing everything in his power to boost soil health in preparation for planting a legume fallow.

"He's doing the basics, putting a bit of nutrition and he's fixing his PH and he's not doing a hell of a lot of ground work, which is really good."

Mill mud at 50 tonnes to the hectare and lime at 1.5 tonnes to the hectare, closely followed by back-to-back fallow crops of nitrogen-binding legumes is the sort of soil health recipe an extension agronomist wants to see.

"He's put a bit of mill mud down just for a bit of nutrition for the next crop which is going to be mung beans and he's also put a bit of lime down," David explained. "It's a sandy soil, it's not a very great soil.

"I think the fact he's putting the trash back into it to break down slowly, he hasn't burnt the trash which is really good...he's doing the basics.

"Last year was the first time we've taken any beans through to harvest. It worked really well, we actually got four tonnes to the hectare of soya beans, which for our first effort was pretty good."

Pictured: Mackay grower Lindsay Neilsen is using a combination of trash, mill by-products, legume fallows and minimum cultivation as part of a progressive nutrient management plan.



"He's fixing his PH and he's not doing a hell of a lot of ground work which is really good."

Legume fallow planting is not a new concept on the Septimus farm which has been in the Neilsen family for four generations.

Soya beans have been grown as a break crop for 15 years and, prior to that, Meringa cowpea.

More recently however, amid a climate of fluctuating sugar prices and a need to develop a more sustainable farming system that centres on boosting organic nitrogen, the focus has shifted from legumes as a manure crop to legumes as a cash crop.

"Last year was the first time we've taken any beans through to harvest," Lindsay said.

"It worked really well, we actually got four tonnes to the hectare of soya beans, which for our first effort was pretty good.

"It's a big benefit to your soil, admittedly taking it to seed you lose a little bit of that benefit, but there's still a lot of benefit in the change of the crop.

"With the low price of sugar at the moment, and the bean price being high, you've got to try and make a few extra dollars where you can."

The family business recently purchased a combine harvester in a determined shift to towards end-to-end bean production on its cane fallows.

With that has come a side-hustle of sorts, which has added a welcome income stream to the business, while

helping out the neighbours at the same time.

"We bought the header last year to make sure we could get it harvested when it needed to be done and take control of the final product," Lindsay said.

"I've inherited a bit of outside work with it, so that's helped pay for it and its also helped other people get into doing the same thing, so it hasn't worked out too bad."

EEF60 TRIAL A NATURAL FIT

When Lindsay was approached by Sugar Research Australia to take part in the CANEGROWERS EEF60 slow release fertiliser project, it was an ideal fit.

Alongside efforts to boost organic nitrogen, he has also been trialling slow release fertilisers on the farm for several years in an effort to maximise productivity while minimising non-organic nitrogen losses.

A Smartcane BMP accredited grower, Lindsay was eager to see if the trial would provide any useful data to assist with his forward-thinking nutrient management plan.

"They were aware that I was already doing a bit of slow release-type fertilisers

Continues next page ►



across the farm and I was interested in seeing the responses I was getting out of it," said Lindsay.

"So the trial fitted into what I was trying to achieve."

Approaching the end of its third and final year, the EEF60 project has seen enhanced efficiency fertiliser trials being undertaken at 60 sites in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Central and Southern growing regions. Water quality monitoring is also taking place at several locations.

The comprehensive trial is a partnership involving Canegrowers, Sugar Research Australia (SRA) and local productivity services groups, including MAPS.

On the Neilsens' farm, strip trials were set up over three seasons using four different treatments, replicated three times, commencing at R1 stage:

- Granular urea 160kg/hectare at 100% of SIX EASY STEPS rate
- Granular urea at 128kg/hectare at 80% of SIX EASY STEPS rate
- 1/3 Entec 2/3 Agromaster 128kg/hectare slow release blend at 80% of SIX EASY STEPS rate
- Grower choice 20% N90/ 80% urea at 128kg/hectare 80% of SIX EASY STEPS rate

Consistent with Smartcane BMP best practice guidelines, fertiliser was applied sub-surface, beneath the trash layer of the ratoon crop using a stool splitting fertiliser box.

Sub-surface application reduces the risk of losses through runoff in rain events or volatilisation, when nitrogen escapes in gaseous form into the atmosphere.

In the Mackay region the trial conditions proved less than ideal, with drier Spring periods during the first two growing seasons.

In theory at least, this limited the potential benefits that might have emerged through the use of nitrogen inhibiting fertilisers such as Entech or N90 or polymer coated slow release granular fertilisers like Agromaster, versus standard granular urea, which is more likely to be lost to leaching or denitrification in larger rainfall events.

Results from the 2019 harvest showed similar results for all four treatments



on the Neilsens' farm, with cane yield in the range of 101 tonne/hectare and CCS at just below 16 for the first three treatments.

The only slight variation was in the fourth treatment with yield in the range of 103 tonne/hectare, but CCS was much the same.

"The last three years haven't been ideal for it, they've all been very dry starts and that's led to our yields being lower than in previous years," Lindsay said.

"But I believe that with more favourable weather conditions, the higher nitrogen blends and slow-release fertilisers would be required to grow a crop to its full potential.

"On other parts of the farm where I have been using slow-release fertilisers it has been regularly producing a higher sugar content.

"The Entech has certainly got a place and I have no doubt the poly-coat would have a place too in different conditions, but as I said, the last three years it hasn't worked for it or shown the potential it really has."

Similar growing conditions during the third year of the trial suggest it's unlikely there will be any great variance in results, at least in the Mackay region, when the final crop is harvested.

That doesn't mean the EEF60 trial hasn't been worth the effort. As the final year's data is collected, there will undoubtedly be lessons to take away.

"The one thing that has come out in some of the trials is that the economic returns of 80% of SIX EASY STEPS nitrogen rate

using EEF's has come out as good as the 100% SIX EASY STEPS rate using urea," David noted.

"These slow release fertilisers do have a place, perhaps in different climates in different soils but it just hasn't shown up in Mackay in the past couple of years."

In terms of getting the balance right from one season to the next, Lindsay is confident the existing SIX EASY STEPS rates of application are within range of what the crop requirements.

"I think the SIX EASY STEPS is sort of pretty close to the mark as far as what the cane actually needs in different areas," he said.

"I guess if you can tweak things with slow releases to get to the next stage, then you do what you can."

For Lindsay Neilsen, there's also the knowledge that he's doing the best he can to reduce nutrient loss from the farm and contributing to research efforts that will ultimately benefit the industry.

"We're not out to destroy anything, we're certainly all aware of all the reef rules and regulations and abide by them and hopefully go a little bit above that," Lindsay said.

"We're best management practice growers here and have been for three or four years now so we're certainly trying to do all the right things." ■

Pictured: (above) Mackay Area Productivity Services Senior Extension Agronomist David McCallum; (right) Lindsay Neilsen's Mackay Farm hosted one of the 60 Enhanced Efficiency Fertiliser trial sites across the industry.



This project is funded by the Australian Government Reef Trust and Queensland Government Great Barrier Reef Innovation Fund.



QSL MARKET UPDATE

Current as of 23 July 2020.

Sugar



- Sugar prices lost steam during the past month, struggling to break above significant technical resistance at 12.30 USc/lb. The lack of fresh fundamental news and overall weak macro environment is causing interest to wane and is reflected in the shrinking volumes traded daily.
- 40% of the Brazilian harvest is now complete, with Brazil maximising sugar production and set to make 36-37 million tonnes this season.
- Speculative activity is limited. The latest Commitment of Traders report is showing a net-long position of 72,000 lots. Greater investor interest will be reliant on further moves in oil prices or a disruption to the Brazilian supply chain.
- **ICE 11 trading range:** Broader trading range to be expected around 11-13 USc/lb, but currently encountering technical resistance at 11.27 USc/lb and 12.30 USc/lb.
- **Closely watched:** COVID-19 related impacts on consumption, UNICA numbers, weather in Thailand and India, speculative activity, trading volumes and technical indicators.

Currency



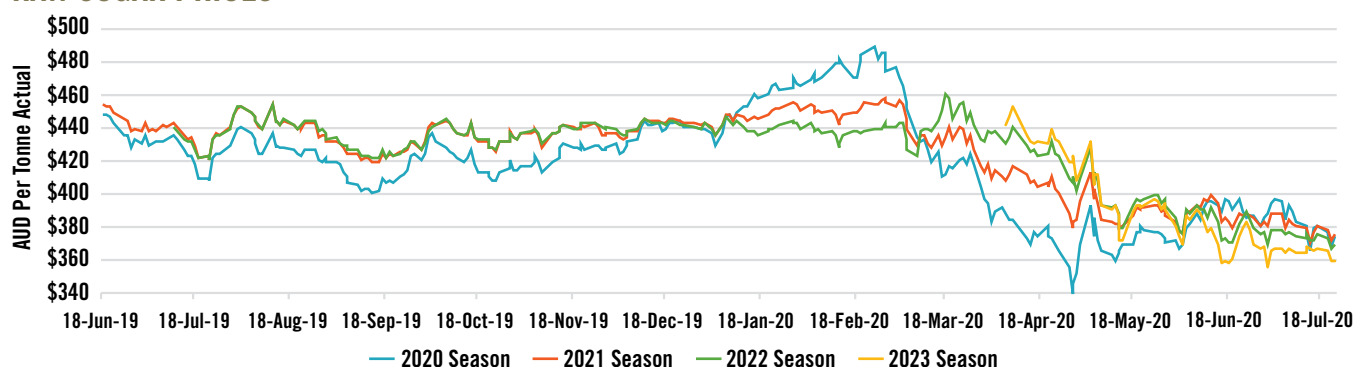
- The Aussie Dollar (AUD) is still running hot, lifting from 0.6838 to 0.7147 against the US Dollar (USD).
- The macro environment remains the main driver, as investors seem not to be too concerned about the second-wave of COVID-19. Broad USD weakness is providing support to most currencies. Equities remain steady, as well as iron ore prices, providing additional support to the Aussie dollar.
- The upcoming US election will play a huge role in the US dollar story over the second half of the year. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is polling well and looks likely to take over the White House, but control of the Senate is less clear at this stage. A clean sweep for the Democrats will likely prompt a shift away from the corporate tax cuts and protectionist trade policies that have been a pillar for USD strength over the past 3.5 years and could instigate a longer-term cyclical shift towards more USD weakness.
- **AUD/USD trading range:** 0.6800 to 0.7200 with potential to break higher.
- **Risks Ahead:** Second wave of COVID-19 in Australia, US-China relationship, and lead up to the US Presidential election.

KEY INDICATORS

	23/07/2020	Monthly change
ICE11 Prompt (JUL20)	11.86 USc/lb	-0.25 USc/lb
Brazilian Real/\$US exchange rate	5.12 BRL	-0.10 BRL
Brent Crude Oil	\$US44.28/barrel	+\$US3.57
Ethanol/Raw Sugar Parity	9.4 USc/lb	-0.88 USc/lb
Net Spec Position	72,000 (net long)	+41,000

	23/07/2020	Monthly change
\$AUS/\$US exchange rate	\$US0.71375	+\$US0.0260
\$US Index	94.98	-2.04
Chinese Yen/\$US exchange rate	7.00 CNY	-0.07 CNY
S+P 500 Index	3,276.02	+162.53
RBA Overnight Cash Rate	0.25%	-

RAW SUGAR PRICES



This is a whole-of-season ICE 11 price chart, based on the Target Price Contract's current 3:2:1 pricing ratio for the 2020 Season and 1:2:2:1 pricing ratio for the 2021, 2022 and 2023 Seasons.

Disclaimer: This report contains information of a general or summary nature and is based on information available to QSL from many sources. 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, investment advice. You should seek your own financial advice and read the QSL Pricing Pool Terms, which are contained on QSL's website. Nothing contained in this report should be relied upon as a representation as to future matters or that a particular outcome will be achieved. Information about past performance is not an indication of future performance. The information in the report is current as at the time of publication and is subject to change, as the information is based on many assumptions and is subject to uncertainties inherent in any market. 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.

QSL GROWER PRICING UPDATE

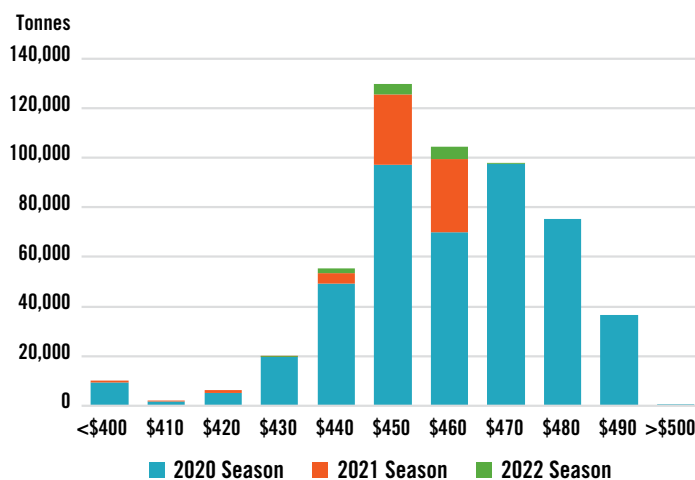


Grower Pricing



- > The price spike experienced in January and February this year prompted a rush of grower-managed pricing, with 70% of orders filled at \$A450 gross or above.
- > QSL has launched its 2021-Season product range, featuring:
 - The new **Grower Floor Contract** which lets you lock in a minimum return, with the potential for higher returns if the market rises.
 - The new **Defaulting Target Price Contract** which lets you set a pricing target but defaults to the Harvest Pool if you don't achieve it before the season starts.
- > The **Individual Futures Contract** has been improved for the 2021 Season, with the option to roll unfilled orders if and when it suits you. In addition, QSL's **Self-Managed Harvest** option has been simplified for 2021 and will also feature the ability to roll unfilled orders.
- > **Commitment limits will also be increased to 70%**, with growers able to use the Self-Managed Harvest to price up to 98% of the GEI Sugar (all their QSL tonnage excluding their highly lucrative US Quota Pool allocation).

QSL GROWER-MANAGED PRICING FILLS – 2020, 2021 & 2022 SEASONS



This chart captures all pricing achieved to date using QSL's Target Price Contract, Individual Futures Contract and Self-Managed Harvest products. Prices quoted at AUD/tonnes actual gross.

Commitment of Traders



Who are speculators?

Speculators provide liquidity in the market by buying and selling futures contracts with a view to taking advantage of price movements without having any interest in the underlying physical asset. Typically, they hold a long position if they believe prices are going to go up, or hold a short position if they believe prices are going to go down.

Impact on the market

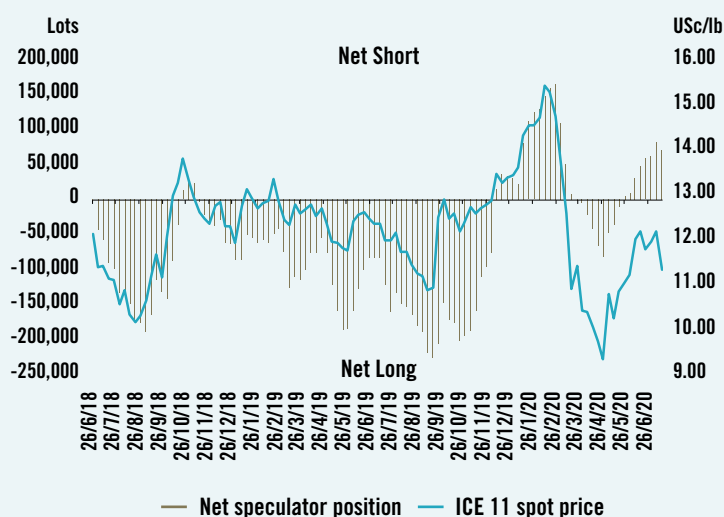
Speculators can make up a large proportion of open interest in the market and so have an outsized influence on it, often causing it to undershoot and overshoot fundamental fair value. If they believe the price of sugar is going to rise, they buy as much as they can, driving up prices. If they believe that sugar prices are going to fall, or the sugar is overpriced, they sell as much as they can while prices are higher.

The COT Report

We are able to get an indication of the speculative portion of the market by checking the weekly Commitments of Traders Report (COT), that is published by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC).

We can see the relationship between the net position held by speculators and price movements. When there is an increase their long position, prices tend to be lower. Inversely, when they hold a short position, prices tend to be higher.

NET SPECULATOR POSITION VS. ICE 11 SPOT PRICE



5 tips to help you find the right financial advice

Many of us may have considered getting financial advice from time to time – but many of us also get stuck before we start – because we just don't know where to begin. Research shows that 80% of people who get financial advice believe it gives them more confidence in making financial decisions and makes them feel more financially secure.*

We spoke with **Anne Fuchs, Head of Advice and Retirement** at Sunsuper, about some of the considerations when deciding what kind of advice you might need and how to find the right financial adviser.

Here are Anne's top 5 tips when it comes to financial advice:

1. TALK TO YOUR SUPER FUND – THEY MAY OFFER ADVICE AT NO ADDITIONAL COST

Many profit-for-members or industry super funds offer financial advice to their members at no additional cost above their membership administration fee. Some funds may charge a small fee which is deducted from your super account. This advice is generally fairly simple around how to make the most of your super to achieve your best retirement outcome. If you have no other major assets other than your home and your super, then this type of advice could be all you need.

If you need advice about more complex financial issues such as Centrelink entitlements, an investment property, estate planning or whether a self-managed super fund might be right for you, then you'll most likely need comprehensive advice. This comes at a cost and you will be required to pay a fee – to your super fund or to an external adviser that they may recommend to you – for the service provided to you.

2. CONSIDER YOUR PAYMENT OPTIONS

Most super funds will allow a fee-for-service advice fee to be deducted from your super account for any advice that is directly related to your superannuation and retirement planning.

This is important, as it means you won't have to pay the cost of the advice upfront. Fees vary, however, in my experience, around \$3,000 seems to be the average, which is not a small sum by any means.

3. ONLY PAY FOR WHAT YOU NEED AT THE TIME

You may only need "moment-in-time" advice for a particular life stage or event. But it may also be worth investing in ongoing advice (and therefore ongoing fees) if your situation warrants it.

4. SHOP AROUND

Meet with at least two advisers before you commit. Most people have had little exposure to financial advisers and don't know what to expect. Going to a couple of initial fact-finding meetings will help you enormously when deciding what you like and don't like about an adviser, and what you need in terms of the scope of financial advice.

These initial appointments are generally complimentary, and only require you to give as much information as you feel comfortable in giving.

Make sure you ask questions about the types of clients the adviser helps and ask them to provide a couple of client case studies about how they've helped people like you. Most importantly, make sure you get a defined quote for the cost of the advice they propose to provide.

At Sunsuper, we do very thorough background checks of any advisers we refer our members to; so if you need comprehensive advice, ask your super fund if they can refer you to an adviser they have pre-vetted.

5. TAKE ACTION!

Do something to get you started – pick any one of the above options as a first step. Research has shown that a young couple that gets financial advice today could be up to \$240,000 better off in retirement.* A financial adviser is like a personal trainer, they'll hold you accountable to the goals you've set yourself – and will help you to make sure you follow through.

For more information on financial advice options through Sunsuper, visit www.sunsuper.com.au/advice-options or call us on 13 11 84 between 8am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday to find out more.

*Research conducted by CoreData on behalf of Sunsuper, December 2016. Visit www.sunsuper.com.au/thedreamproject/value-of-advice to find out more.

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Grower-focused extension drives practice change

Three years of farming changes made by Wet Tropics cane growers have collectively led to a 10% reduction in dissolved inorganic nitrogen thanks to more than 320 growers making a confirmed practice change over 67,000 hectares, as part of the Australian Government's Reef Trust III program, delivered by the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership (WTSIP).

SUPPLIED BY WTSIP

WTSIP and CANEGROWERS Innisfail Chairman **Joe Marano** said the farmers' actions were estimated to have reduced dissolved inorganic nitrogen flowing to the Reef by more than 260 tonnes, a great achievement by the industry.

He said growers are continuing to rise to the challenge and lessons learned over the three-year period could help the cane industry in the future.

"When the \$10 million funding was first announced we decided to take a different approach in the Wet Tropics region," Mr Marano said.

"Whole-of-farm nutrient management plans have been popular because they're not just another document, they're useful to growers."

"Seventeen organisations were brought to the table from industry bodies, mills and productivity services to sugar research and natural resource management organisations. We worked together to coordinate the best way to invest the funding so that it achieved its water quality goals and was also a benefit to growers."

A team of 10 extension officers was employed across the region's six districts from Mossman to the Herbert, with the partnership deciding to focus its extension program on substantially improving nutrient management

planning across the region, using a consistent science-based approach.

Mr Marano said the 17-organisation alliance was a milestone for the industry.

"We had our challenges, but the concept of a cross-industry and cross-regional approach was an important step forward for the industry, and ultimately good for the growers too," he said.

"As part of the program, over 400 cane growers signed up to work with an extension officer on a whole-of-farm nutrient management plan. The plans have been popular because they're not just another document, they're useful to growers.

"They help with productivity and they've also been a starting point for extension officers getting to know growers and their businesses, and how best to help each individual in their particular part of the landscape.

"We've learned that even though we've benefitted from a consistent approach, there is still no such thing as a 'blanket approach'. It all comes down to skilled extension officers on the ground who are flexible and can adapt the tools we've developed to make them useful to each grower."

While the main focus of the Reef Trust III program was on extension services, WTSIP also delivered soil health workshops for over 120 growers as well as targeted grants to help 62 growers overcome financial barriers preventing them from changing to practices with lower water quality risk.

Mr Marano said the Reef Trust III program finished in 2019, but WTSIP's extension team is still supporting growers until the end of 2020 with funding from a partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

"Making practice changes takes time and providing grower-focused guidance and support on the ground is a critical part of the process," he said. "We are lobbying the government and other funding sources to continue to fund on-ground extension services."

REEF TRUST III ACHIEVEMENTS

WET TROPICS	TARGET	ACTUAL
Hectares of practice change	41,500	67,044
Reduction in DIN	260 tonnes	266 tonnes
Growers with practice change	425	321 (500 engaged)

DAVID WAH DAY

David Wah Day has been farming 58 hectares close to the Trinity Inlet and national park in Gordonvale since 1964. While only a small farm, David has consistently made changes over the years to improve soil erosion and silt movement. These include laser-levelling, moving to 1.8 metre rows and minimising cultivation.

David worked with extension officer Joel Tierney to develop a nutrient management plan, which he says makes things simpler and easier. He also wanted to improve drainage on his property and received a grant to do this.

"We still had open drains on our farm and the feral pigs were running riot," he said.

"We decided to put underground soakage pipe in and turn the open drain into spoon drains, which is a huge cost for a small farmer, so I applied for a grant and luckily WTSIP helped by contributing a percentage of the cost."

David also works on his soil health, planting fallow crops and resting paddocks from cane for up to three years.

"A cover crop is a break but it's not always long enough," he said. "We put pumpkins and melons in on one block for three years and when we planted cane back on it, we went to a sixth ratoon. The first year we got 150 tonnes a hectare. Even when we ploughed it out it was 100 tonnes a hectare. With another year's spell, we're now on our eighth ratoon."

The long-time farmer has never burnt his cane trash and has practiced minimum tillage for many years.

"There have usually been financial reasons for making changes, especially on a small farm, and minimum tillage is one example of that. When these changes lead to environmental gains as well, that's great."



Continues next page ►

ALAN COLGRAVE

Fifth generation cane farmer **Alan Colgrave** farms 100 hectares in Mourilyan. Located in low wet country with light sandy soils across most of his farm, he sees increasing his organic carbon levels as being the key to improving his productivity.

Over the years he's made a lot of changes to address this including adopting green cane trash blanketing in fallow and moving to 100% fallow plant.

He has also moved to wider rows with all of this tractors and farm equipment matched to the same centres.

Alan has used mill mud in the past on both plant cane and ratoons but due to cost has decided to shift to a granular fertiliser program.

While making this change, he found it useful to get a second opinion on his nutrient management by working with WTSIP extension officer **Bob Stewart** on the development of a whole of farm nutrient management plan.

"Having a nutrient management plan has really helped simplify my nutrient management and working with Bob has also enabled me to be a bit more scientific about trying out some new things.

"I was interested in trying Entrench as a denitrification inhibitor, so we did some replicated trials on acre plots for two years, and we've also put out some trace elements on areas of low productivity. The results have shown some differences, but nothing major," he said.



DOUG CREES

Doug Crees farms 153 hectares alongside the Mossman River and the changes he's been making to improve water quality have seen barramundi return to farm waterways.

In working his way towards Smartcane BMP accreditation, he says the biggest hurdle was that he didn't apply fertiliser under the ground.

"Initially, I got a contractor in to apply the fertiliser sub-surface and I saw the benefits, but it wouldn't have been cost effective for me to buy a fertiliser bin by myself," he said.

"I applied for a (Reef Trust III) grant and the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership contributed about 50 per cent of the cost.

"Now I can change fertiliser from one end of the paddock to the other and I don't have to wait for the cane to be 600mm high so I can put the fertiliser on a bit earlier. That means I can apply it in the dry too, when it's easier.

"It's another piece of the puzzle to try and keep the water quality going out to the Reef as clear as we can."

The Crees family has a constructed wetland on the farm, which was once a drain that was targeted by feral pigs. They wanted to solve that problem, get some trees up and dry out the adjoining paddock.

"It's sort of a win-win for us. The area's become a little sanctuary for fingerlings and it acts as a silt trap as well. The water quality is obviously pretty good because the fish are loving it."

Doug says changes to farming practices are ongoing. Other improvements have included moving to zonal tillage practices to reduce soil compaction and revegetating riverbanks – something the family did more than a decade ago for cane machinery operating safety and for water quality benefits.



BACK 2 BASICS

A good example of the need to customise reef programs is WTSIP's 'Back 2 Basics' workshops in the Herbert district.

A small cluster of growers in areas with high risk for nutrient loss in the Herbert district received tailor-made 'Back to Basics' workshops designed by local extension officers Leanne Carr, Jarrod Sartor (WTSIP/HCPST), Shannon O'Brien and Adam Royle (HCPST). The team identified that current extension techniques were not working for this group and set about trying to find out why.

"We wanted to find out what sort of extension support this group needed that would be useful to them," Ms Carr said.

"After a few conversations, some training in different approaches and lots of planning we decided to go back to some of the basics of soil health, soil chemistry and plant nutrition. But we needed to find a different way of presenting the information, so we developed some hands-on activities in an attempt to make the workshops a lot more interactive and interesting."

One of the participants, Sammy Vecchio said:

"We needed this 20 years ago! I can understand how it all fits together now and am telling other growers to go to the workshops. We need more of this, it's so much better than sitting in a meeting and I'm still thinking about it while I'm working around my farm." ■



Australian Government

REEF TRUST



Growth-boosting bacteria shows promise for cane production

Supplied by SOSBio

Research into the use of growth-boosting bacteria to increase cane production while improving environmental outcomes is producing promising results, with overseas field trials showing an increase in yield and sugar content.

Biotech fertiliser company, Sustainable Organic Solutions Pty Ltd (SOSBio), in collaboration with Mitr Phol Sugarcane Research Centre and the University of Queensland (UQ), is studying the efficacy of eco-friendly fertilisers, consisting of plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) used in conjunction with a mix of organic and chemical fertilisers.

SOSBio's Senior Researcher Dr Chanyarat Paungfoo-Lonhienne (Adjunct Fellow at UQ) and Dr Nantida Watanarojanaporn (Mitr Phol) conducted the field trials at Mitr Phol Sugarcane Research Center in Thailand, which confirmed the positive results reported from earlier glasshouse trials.

"Current agricultural practices involve the extensive use of chemical fertilisers to increase productivity and have a detrimental impact on the environment," Dr Paungfoo-Lonhienne said.

"The use of plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria and organic fertiliser could reduce the impact of chemical fertilisers while increasing the yields," said Dr Watanarojanaporn.

In the trials, sugarcane was grown on soils fertilised with commercial standard fertilisers (combined Soil Mate NPK fertiliser and Soil Mate organic fertiliser (Mitr Phol Sugar Corp), or half of the standard fertilisers combined with EcoNPK organic-chemical fertiliser mix (SOSBio).

All treatments received the same N application rate (57 kg per hectare), amended with or without SOS3 PGPR coated on a mineral carrier (10^7 cell/g), for nine months. The plot size was 6,400 m².

The initial trial, conducted in Thailand, showed outstanding results, with a 17.8% increase in cane yield and a 15% increase in sugar yield compared to commercial standard fertilisers (Figure 1), researchers said.

"We understand that for commercial cane growers the most important parameter is an economic benefit when they apply new technologies," Dr Nikolai Kinaev, CEO of SOSBio said.

"Taking into account extra costs when SOS3 PGPR on a mineral carrier is used, net economic benefit for sugarcane growers is 10 to 15% depending on the practices tested* in the trials to date", said Dr Kinaev.

In Australia, Herbert Cane Productivity Services Ltd and MSF Sugar are currently undertaking field trials in the Herbert and Innisfail districts.

These trial plots will be harvested during the 2020 and 2021 seasons, with the results to be published once the data becomes available.

The research is funded by the Federal Government's Cooperative Research Centre Project to support green technologies for the wide production of a sustainable eco-friendly biofertiliser.

"The Federal Government's investment in this research will pay dividends in the future, not only for cane growers but also for other growers who are looking to farm sustainably while boosting their crop's growth," Dr Kinaev said. ■

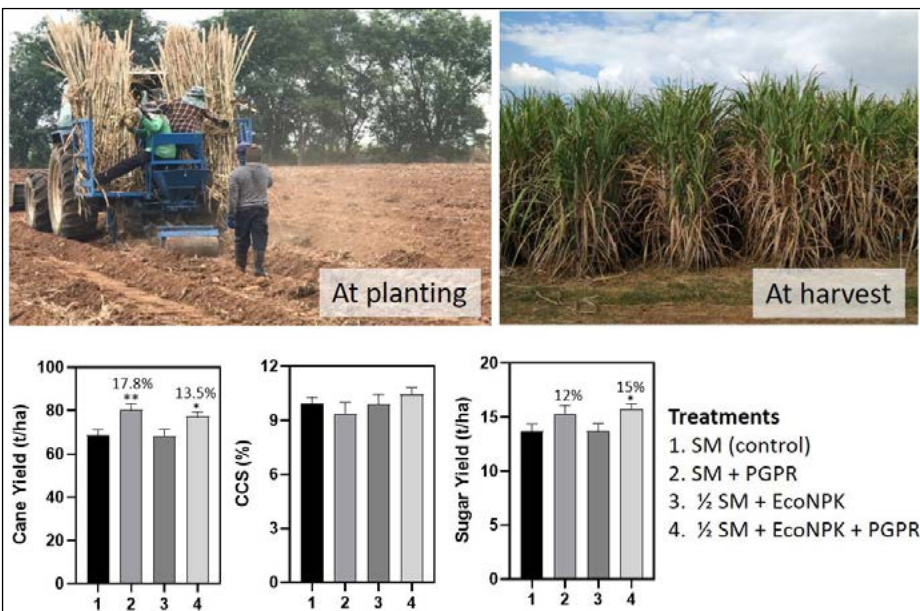


Figure 1. The performance of sugarcane grown with the plant growth-promoting rhizobacterium strain SOS3 in the Thailand trial. Sugarcane was grown for nine months on Soil Mate (SM) or EcoNPK organic-chemical mix fertilised soil amended with SOS3 bacterium. The Bars represent averages and standard errors. Asterisks above bars indicate significant differences from the control: *P < 0.05; **P < 0.01 (ANOVA).

*Based on current market sugar prices.

STICKER SPOTTER COMPETITION



CANEGROWERS sticker spotters are out and about in all sugarcane regions looking for vehicles proudly displaying their CANEGROWERS Growing Together bumper sticker.

Is this your number plate? If so, you're a winner!

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- ✓ Wait for one of the CANEGROWERS sticker spotters sees it as you drive around your district
- ✓ Check the next *Australian Canegrower* magazine for a list of number plates
- ✓ If yours is listed, contact CANEGROWERS Brisbane office to claim a prize.
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SMARTCANE BMP RECOGNITION

By Kate Gowdie, Smartcane BMP Manager

There is now, more than ever, good reason to participate in the Smartcane BMP program and achieve accreditation.

The Smartcane BMP program is currently the only program to have a 'Recognised' status from the Queensland Government. This means that growers who are accredited in Smartcane BMP are deemed to be meeting their legal obligations for sediment and nutrients and will not be the focus of compliance activities while they remain accredited.

This formalises the arrangement we have had with the Queensland Government for several years. As before, accredited growers can avoid compliance visits by letting the compliance officer know their status and sending a copy of their accreditation certificate.

Further, accredited growers now have the option to avoid any contact from compliance staff by voluntarily registering their Smartcane BMP status with the Environment Department. If your accreditation is on the register, the compliance officers will know

not to contact you in relation to reef regulations.

To take advantage of this new option, accredited growers will need to provide the Smartcane BMP Program with permission to share their details on the government's reef compliance register. These details include their name, ABN and contact details, the address of the farm and the term of the accreditation (date of expiry).

All accredited growers in the Smartcane BMP database have been sent an email asking them to opt in, or opt out, of having their details on the reef compliance register. It is the grower's choice.

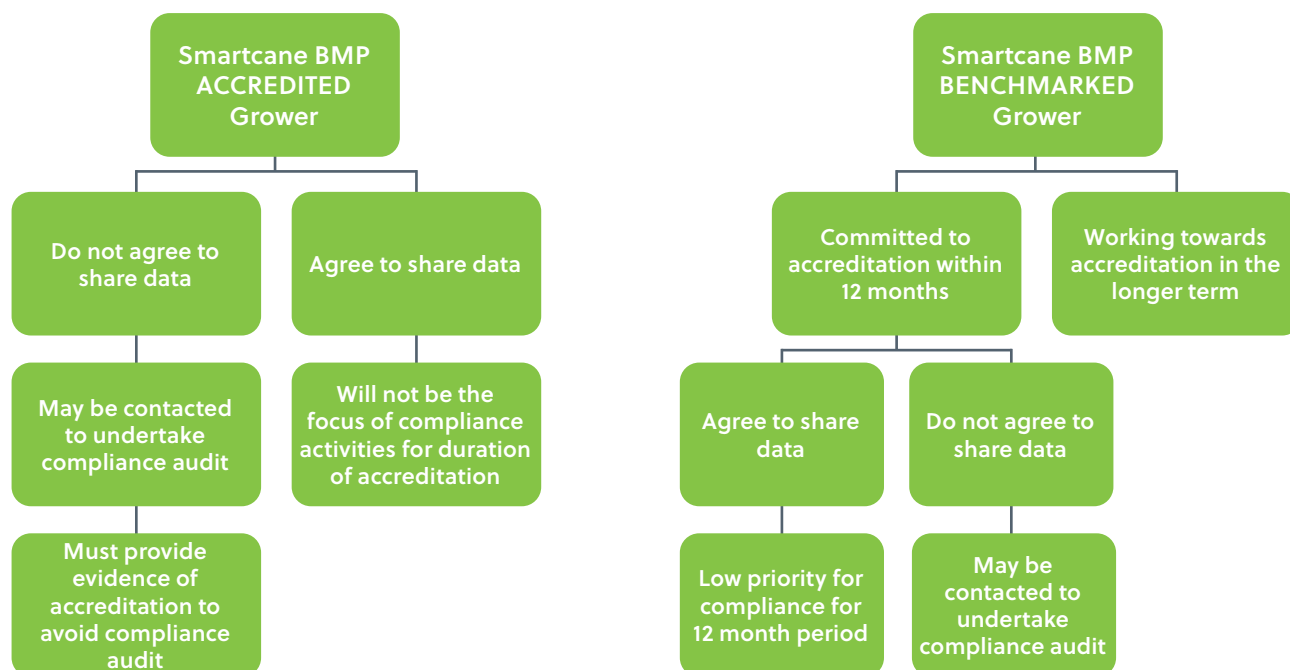
If you are an accredited grower and have yet to receive your email, please contact the Smartcane BMP Office on 07 3864 6444.

This process differs from the short-term arrangement that the Queensland Government is offering growers who are involved in certain water quality projects, wherein the grower is considered a low priority for compliance visits for the time they are involved in the project. These projects are referred to as being 'Acknowledged'.

This short-term arrangement will be available to growers who have benchmarked in Smartcane BMP and have committed to undertaking an accreditation audit within 12 months. If you meet these criteria and want to be added to the low priority register, please contact your local Smartcane BMP facilitator to discuss.

In relation to meeting regulations, being a supplier of sustainable sugar and securing our industry's reputation, accreditation in Smartcane BMP remains the gold standard. ■

PATHWAYS TO LOW PRIORITY FOR SMARTCANE BMP GROWERS



Mycorrhizae fungi inoculation in sugarcane

Supplied by Sumitomo

Modern agricultural practices, particularly sugarcane production systems are often detrimental to key aspects of soil health. Sugarcane production produces a large amount of biomass and requires substantial inputs of both water and nutrients to produce high yields. Thus, placing high demands on our soils.

A critical component to soil health and achieving high yields is being aware of the beneficial microbial life in our soils and ensuring the most beneficial species are present at adequate levels. One of the key factors that growers should be aware of is that Sugarcane is a mycorrhizal crop which means it relies significantly on forming a symbiotic relationship with soil based beneficial fungi called mycorrhizae to grow to its full potential.

Native mycorrhizae species are present in most soils although cropping practices often result in their levels being severely reduced, which can limit the crops ability to achieve its full potential. Cultivation practices break up the network of mycorrhizal hyphae in the soil and other practices such as fallow periods, continual wetting and drying cycles, the use of certain fungicides like propiconazole and the growing of non-mycorrhizal crops can significantly deplete the levels of mycorrhizae in the soil.

Mycorrhizae increases the health and improves the growth of cane by colonising the roots and extending vast networks of hyphae well beyond where the root themselves finish. This helps the plant forage for and access soil nutrients and moisture that are otherwise inaccessible to the crop. 80% of agricultural crops form a bond with mycorrhizae and cane growers should be aware that making sure crops like mungbeans and soybeans also have adequate mycorrhizae in the soil will help maximise their growth as well.

Another benefit of ensuring cane and bean crops have a strong colonisation of mycorrhizae is the ability to maximise the efficient capture and uptake of applied fertiliser. Farmers invest significant dollars on synthetic fertilisers and a strong network of mycorrhizae in the soil will ensure that the uptake of these nutrients is maximised and their leeching outside the rootzone is minimised.

Mycorrhizae also help with overall soil health by secreting a carbon rich glue-like substance known as glomalin that over time helps build soil structure, organic carbon percentage and overall soil health.

Until recently the technology to produce high quality, concentrated, easy to use and cost-effective mycorrhizae inoculants hasn't been available. Unlike their rhizobium bacterial inoculant cousins that get applied to legume crops and pastures, mycorrhizae have proved more difficult to develop into similarly successful inoculants, at least until now.

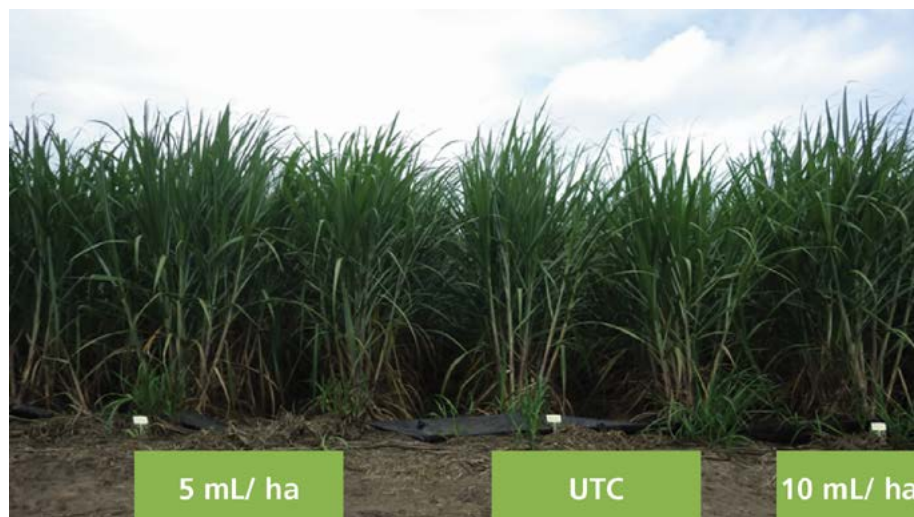
Sumitomo Agrosolutions over recent years has focused considerable efforts into producing high quality, highly useable and affordable mycorrhizae inoculants for use in a range of crops including sugarcane and bean crops. Sumitomo brings considerable experience with biological products. Sumitomo was the first company to develop Bt insecticides decades ago with brands like Dipel and XenTari, among others. Sumitomo now have a new highly concentrated liquid mycorrhizae inoculant called EndoFuse that can be easily applied to sugarcane billets or in-furrow with a rate range as low as 10-15 mL per ha and mixed with rhizobium

inoculants at equivalent rates when treating mungbean and soybeans.

Given the yield and quality improvements that have been seen in recent trials the relatively low cost per hectare of EndoFuse provides an excellent return of investment, especially when you factor in that you are also building your long-term soil health.

In recent trials conducted at Bundaberg and Mount Tyson in Qld, EndoFuse inoculated cane recorded a 5.47 T/ ha yield increase compared to the untreated while mungbeans showed a good positive response with a 7% increase over uninoculated. ■

Pictured: An EndoFuse mycorrhizae cane trial at Bundaberg clearly showing the increased growth achieved compared with the uninoculated crop.



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Sumitomo Agrosolutions

IMPORTANCE OF BALANCED CROP NUTRITION

By Deb Telford

All components of the farming system are inter-related to ensure a productive, profitable and sustainable outcome. There is no simple recipe to follow to achieve maximum returns for your investment. Balanced crop nutrition is one of the most important yet complex components of sugarcane farming.



The key to sustainable nutrient management is applying the right nutrients at the right rate, in the right place, at the right time and in the right form. These decisions should always be based on soil testing, farm knowledge and on-farm trial results that lead to a continual improvement of practices to suit each situation.

Industry soil-specific nutrient management guidelines have been developed and validated. This has involved many years of rigorous field and glasshouse trials, replicated over numerous soil and climatic conditions and farming systems. These guidelines are continually updated as new information becomes available to enable adjustments to nutrient management practices for specific circumstances. The SIX EASY STEPS approach to nutrient management is key to sustainable nutrient

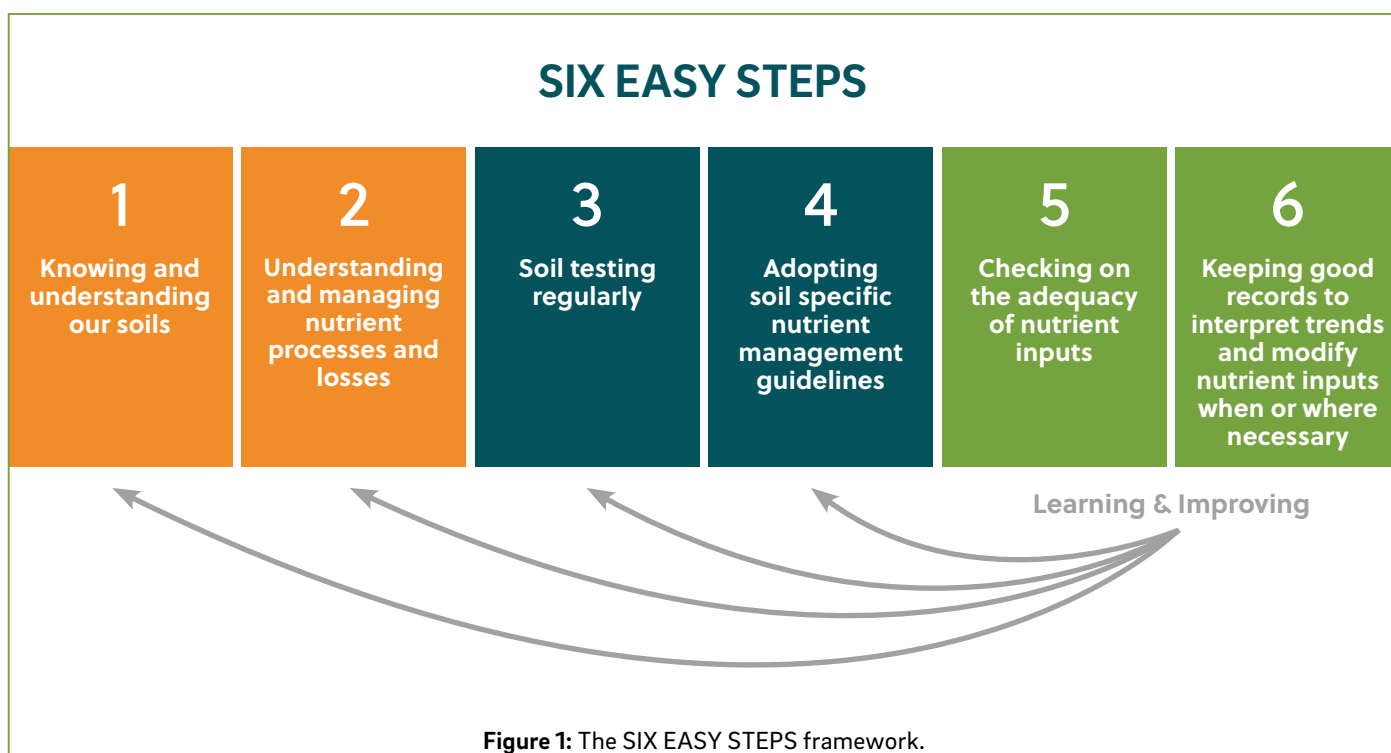


Figure 1: The SIX EASY STEPS framework.

FOR SUSTAINABLE SUGARCANE PRODUCTION

management in the Australian sugar industry (see figure 1).

Unfortunately, in recent years, the emphasis has been on nitrogen application rates and there has been a tendency to undervalue the importance of all other nutrients required for sustainable sugarcane production. The perfect analogy is represented in the SRA Australian Sugarcane Nutrition Manual 2018 and included in SIX EASY STEPS workshops using staves of a barrel (see figure 2).

The total volume of the barrel represents maximum sugarcane production:

- if one nutrient is under-supplied (e.g. the barrel has a hole in it), production will be lower
- if one nutrient is over-supplied (e.g. the barrel overflows), there will be no extra production

The barrel analogy is also useful when considering other management practices including weed, pest

and disease control, irrigation and drainage, variety selection, harvesting and farming systems operations. Just like nutrient management, these practices are also influenced by soil type, position in the landscape and climate.

Whole-of-farm nutrient management planning using SIX EASY STEPS makes it easy to adopt best-practice nutrient management and ensures balanced nutrition. When developing a nutrient management plan for your farm it is important to also consider the impact of farm practices, position in the landscape and climatic conditions on crop performance.

Identifying and mitigating production constraints, tailoring management practices to soil type and position in the landscape, ensuring timeliness of operations and considering the impact of different climatic conditions on soil and crop performance contribute towards more sustainable sugarcane production.

The recently released SIX EASY STEPS TOOLBOX is evidence of continuous improvement in the SIX EASY STEPS approach to nutrient management. A range of tools have been designed to help you and your advisor make more informed nutrient management decisions to improve profitability and nutrient use efficiency.

Guidance on adjusting nutrient inputs for specific situations including final ratoon crops, late season ratoons, sodic soils, waterlogged sites, high performing sites, following legume fallow crops and following the application of mill by-products is also provided. More information is available here: <https://bit.ly/3hAw4a7>

Ensuring you have balanced crop nutrition is one of the most critical activities for productive, profitable and sustainable sugarcane production.

Consult your local trusted advisor about whether any improvements may be required to your current nutrient management program. ■

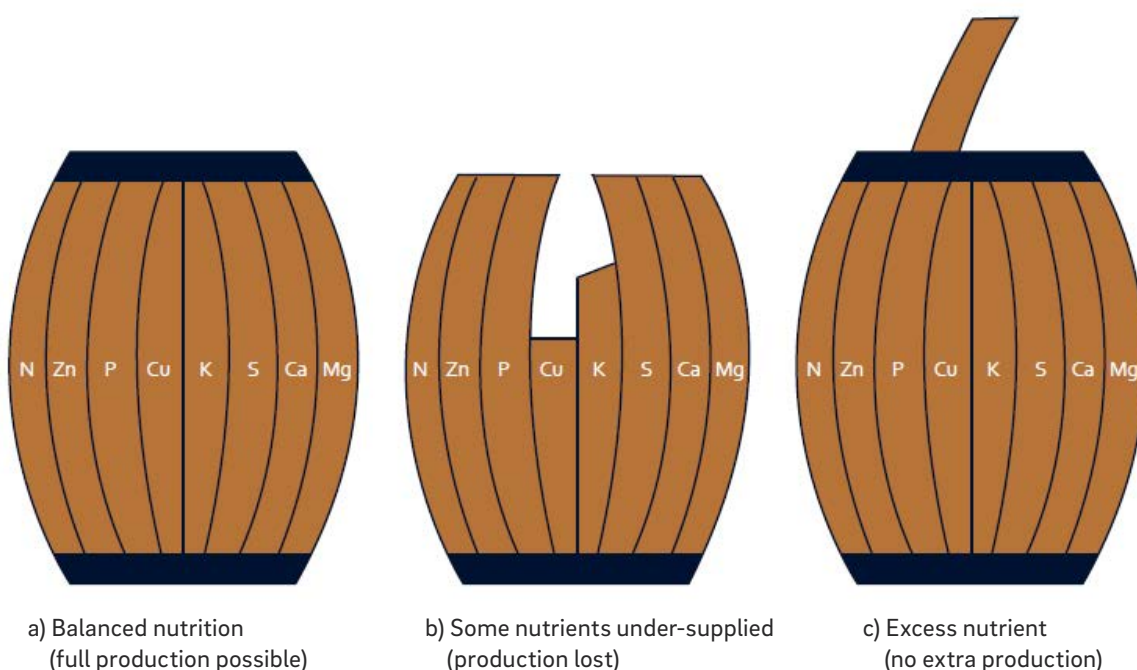


Figure 2: Staves of a barrel analogy illustrating the need for balanced nutrition – Liebig's Law of the Minimum.

CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

Supplied by CANEGROWERS district offices

MOSSMAN

With the crushing underway and COVID-19 restrictions being eased, we are starting to get back to business as usual at the CANEGROWERS Mossman office, with several face-to-face meetings held in July for the board members and growers.

On 6 July, board members met with QSL CEO and Managing Director, **Greg Beashel**, for a presentation and update on world sugar markets, the performance of current Pricing Pools, and to hear about new products being introduced for the 2021 season.

On 7 July, a small group of growers met with SRA and Mossman Agricultural staff to hear the latest on the Mossman Cane to Creek project on Marrs Creek.

With 12 months of the project now past, there have been a number of demonstration days for growers on the trial sites and after quite an extended dry period there are now some

water samples and readings to consider. The project will continue during the 2020 season, with further trials around chemicals and nutrients and continued water sampling to be undertaken.

On 14 July, mill and grower bargaining agents met on the Tableland, where mill representatives provided a milling performance and seasonal update.

A total of 37,577 tonnes of sugarcane were crushed for a mill average of 11.5CCS during Week 5 (ending 18/7).

Pictured: growers attended the Mossman Cane to Creek project update on Marrs Creek.



CAIRNS

Rainfall in some areas has caused delays to farming and harvesting operations, whereas other areas have remained fine. Planting in the Babinda district has been delayed due to the persistent rain. Across the region the crop is achieving the pre-season estimate and a pleasingly strong performance is being achieved by the milling company.

The Advanced Greenstar GPS training course aimed at unlocking GPS potential (a CANEGROWERS Cairns Region initiative in partnership with Honeycombes Cairns and the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program) is now fully booked and will run through into 2021. Depending on the success of this pilot course, alternate options will be looked at in the future.

Jeff Day and **Barry Stubbs** remain as your QSL grower representatives for the Mulgrave and South Johnstone areas respectively. Feel free to contact them directly regarding any QSL matters.

INNISFAIL

Wet weather has continued to interrupt harvesting. As of 20 July, 223 hours had been recorded at South Johnstone Mill as lost time due to wet weather.

Despite the interruptions and impact of wet conditions, the CCS so far this season is tracking slightly above the same period in the 2019 Season.

Mill performance so far this season has been excellent, with only minor stoppages and an average crushing rate above 520 tonnes per hour.

Planting has been delayed, but improved weather conditions have allowed some growers to get in and make a start, with the focus mainly on getting ground ready.

The increase in the levy for the local productivity services was finally resolved with an increase from 7.7 to 10 cents per tonne approved under the CSA by the CANEGROWERS Collective.

TULLY

A week without rain has been welcomed by all in the Tully District and as the country dries out the CCS is rising. As at 23 July, 460,000 tonnes have been crushed, with a year to date CCS of 11.6 units. We should have 20% of the crop crushed and harvested by the end of July, however there is more rain forecast late in the month, just in time for the show holiday.

Growers are looking at the climate forecasts that have changed from predicting probabilities of a wetter crushing season to a normal crushing season, after what has been a very disrupted start. While there was some early planting done, most was disrupted and there will be some pressure on the planting contractors for the next few months.

HERBERT RIVER

More rain throughout the Herbert has hindered harvesting and planting operations in the district, as also occurred in the second week of the season.

After Week 4, Herbert River mills had crushed a total of 544,880 tonnes, with Victoria Mill crushing 383,527 tonnes and Macknade Mill having crushed 157,681 tonnes at the time of writing. The season to date CCS is sitting at 11.24.

Cane variety performance for the region thus far includes Q250 at 12.21 CCS, Q209 at 11.86 CCS, Q240 at 11.61 CCS.

The mill has reported that EM is looking higher than at this stage last year. The mill carried out four snap EM samples for the week as a check. In one of these samples, of the 20KG tested, 5KG of was trash.

BURDEKIN

Whilst they say you should only worry about things within your control, it is human nature to worry nonetheless. We cannot control mother nature, who recently dumped 20-80mm of rain across the Burdekin district, effectively putting the brakes on the crushing with farms harvesting what burnt cane they could in the rain before it became too boggy to do so.

Wilmar transferred burnt cane between mills to get it crushed before shutting down. Barring any further wet weather, it is expected that the stoppage may last for 1.5 weeks.

The rainfall, despite the obvious negative, will provide some positives for plant cane and ratoons, and creates the window of opportunity for machinery maintenance.

Prior to this recent rain event, the Burdekin had experienced a relatively good run with dry weather and the season had been progressing well.

The prospect of La Nina is on everyone's lips at the moment, but again, there's no point worrying about something we

cannot control and the focus will be to get as much cane off as quickly as possible, as the last thing the district needs is a late finish.

Due largely to COVID-19, the Burdekin Shire Council placed a freeze on rate increases in their 2020/2021 budget, which was welcome news and the industry is grateful. We look forward to engaging and working with the Council in the lead-up to ensuing budgets to get the best possible plan in place to address perceived rate inequalities across the community.

We are heading into the State election and we are seeing more activity from political parties. CANEGROWERS Burdekin has and will be putting our viewpoints forward on behalf of members in regard to important issues, such as reducing costs for farmers for electricity and water, support for diversification away from the reliance on crystal, and the repealing the red tape associated with the more draconian measures of the amended reef regulations.

PROSERPINE

The start of Proserpine's 2020 crushing season was delayed for 24 hours due to wet weather. Crushing eventually got underway on 1 July, with most harvesters able to find some dry ground.

As a result, throughput for the first week was severely reduced.

A few commissioning issues and teething problems continued into the second week causing some problems in the field.

By Week 3, the mill had settled into a routine and was able to claw back some of the lost time.

At the end of Week 3, the mill had crushed 193,000 tonnes (or 12%) of its estimated 1.62 million tonne crop.

CCS content has been above expectations and averaged 12.99 in Week 3 – the season-to-date average CCS stands at 12.69. Standout varieties in the initial weeks have been kQ228 and Q240. The highest CCS sample to date has been 15.78 from a rake of plant Q240 from the Waterson Productivity District.

Initially, growers will be paid an average CCS of 14.00, however this will be reviewed in the coming weeks in light of weather impacts.

Irrigators in the PRWSS are reminded that Sunwater has now moved to online and IVR self-service water ordering systems. Irrigators must be registered for these services to access water.

Continues next page ►

CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

MACKAY/PLANE CREEK

Marian Mill is leading the field of the three Mackay Sugar mills at present with 404,200.97 tonnes of cane crushed for the week ended 19 July (Week 6), followed by Farleigh with 301,281.31 and Racecourse with 273,225.33.

Racecourse's CCS jumped to 13.33 for the week but the season's average CCS has remained in the 12-13 range, with Racecourse averaging 12.49 followed by Farleigh with 12.10 and Marian with 12.02. The overall average is 12.18.

Wilmar's Plane Creek Mill had crushed more than 201,000 tonnes on 21 July (Week 4).

Throughput was below budget due to a planned maintenance stop and reduced crush rates from a master turbine gearbox issue.

CCS levels continued to improve with the season-to-date CCS exceeding 12 units for the first time in the season.

The highest CCS was 16.20, from a rake of Q253 plant cane in the Carmila productivity district.

Crop estimates remain at just under 5 million tonnes cane for Mackay Sugar and 1.23 million tonnes for Plane Creek.

Mackay Sugar Crushing Figures	
Week ended: 19 July 2020 (Week 6)	
Farleigh	67,448.27 (YTD 301,281.31)
Marian	78,254.81 (YTD 404,200.97)
Racecourse	63,320.33 (YTD 273,225.33)
Total	209,023.41
YTD	978,707.61 tonnes
CCS Week	12.95
CCS YTD	12.18

Plane Creek Mill Crushing Figures

Week ended: 18 July 2020 (Week 4)	
Cane crushed	53,967 tonnes
YTD	201,268 tonnes
Average bin weight week	3.75
Average bin weight YTD	3.72
CCS Week	12.76
CCS YTD	12.18

Rural electrical safety awareness induction

CANEGROWERS Mackay has worked with TAFE Queensland to offer the new electrical safety online induction.

This induction is similar to the one offered previously but the content has been reviewed and updated by relevant electrical personnel.

The short course is suitable for sugar industry workers who are required to work near live electrical apparatus.

Some of the content includes powerline risks, exclusion zones, step potential and some interesting case studies and short electrical awareness videos.

The course will provide growers and their employees with a basic understanding of hazard identification, risk control and risk assessment, specific to the rural industries.

The course is offered online, takes about one hour to complete, and costs \$95. To enroll visit the TAFE Queensland website: tafeqld.edu.au/courses/18936/rural-electrical-safety-awareness

For further information contact Shelley Dent at the CANEGROWERS Mackay office on 07 4944 2600.

BUNDABERG

CANEGROWERS Bundaberg is part of a consortium – which includes CANEGROWERS Cairns, Tully, Isis, Burdekin and Maryborough, and the Pioneer Canegrowers Organisation – that has co-funded a social media campaign to emphasise the impact that increasing red-tape is having on all farming sectors.

The #farmersfeedus social media banner is being pitched strongly at the 'mum and dad' cohort of voters who are key influencers for the major political parties.

Less than six weeks after launching a petition-driven campaign to bring mainstream attention to the plight of farmers around the 2019 reef regulations, we now have over 4,700 signatures.

Many are from the city/urban areas around Brisbane, as well as other Australian capitals.

There have been two petitions to the same end running simultaneously – one an MP-sponsored Queensland Parliament petition, which alone has more than 3,000 signatures to date, and an online iPetition which is open to everyone in Australia.

A #farmersfeedus Facebook page was launched on 9 June and has almost 500 followers to date, all of whom are very active and deliver reaches of up to 40,000 per post and hundreds of shares. All the posts/videos are pointing to the petitions.

We have recently connected with another environmental expert, C&R Consulting, including the internationally recognised Dr Chris Cuff and his associate Dr Cecily Rasmussen.

The overall approach of the campaign to date has been to break down the complex web of information about the lack of

ISIS

The first of the cane for the 2020 crushing season passed through the Isis Central Sugar Mill rollers on Monday 13 July, with the mill operating in five-day-mode. It is anticipated that the 2020 season will wind up in the first half of November.

	Tonnes Crushed	Tonnes Crushed YTD	CCS Week	CCS YTD
Week 1	33 783.09	33 783.09	13.82	13.82

The start of the crush has also seen trash baling ramp up across the district, with bonus incentives on offer from the Oreco Group should a target number of bales be reached. A collective agreement has been negotiated and agreed with Oreco on behalf of members.

Distribution of Spring Plants will commence in September (weather permitting) and the 2020 Spring Plant order form will see the inclusion of SRA19 and SRA20. Order forms will be distributed by Isis Productivity Ltd.

CANEGROWERS Isis wishes all local members and the wider industry a safe and successful 2020 cane harvesting season.

Rates

Rates is now a dirty word in agriculture across the broader Bundaberg region, where landholders are being unfairly penalised with significant rate increases whereby:

- 94% will receive a rate increase well above CPI.
- Most will receive a rate increase greater than 60%.
- Five very unfortunate landowners will receive a rate increase of at least 191%.

In 2019, Council collected \$4,960,000 in general rates from Category 9 - Agricultural Land, representing around 5.88% of the total budget. The recently announced budget will now see agricultural land ratepayers pay \$9,999,219 or 12.41% of the budget.

Our members are very disappointed and betrayed by this Bundaberg Regional Council decision. Mayor Jack Dempsey made pre-election promises, stating that he would, "minimise any extreme impacts on farm rates" and that he expected the overall rate revenue increase to be in line with CPI.

On behalf of our members, prior to the BRC Budget, both CANEGROWERS Isis and Bundaberg CANEGROWERS actively encouraged members to question their annual valuation, lodge objections and meet with the newly elected Council to request that they keep the overall collection of rates to around \$4,960,000 or 5.88% of the total budget. We do acknowledge that land values have increased, and this has played a part in the rates rise, but Council has many methods available to it to lessen this impact.



scientific checks and the implications of the reef regulations into bite-size pieces of information that engage a mainstream audience.

Importantly, the research (drawn off the government's own media) being shared makes it clear that Australian farmers are providing around 88% of all food and drink on Australian tables today, while continuing to be undermined by government red tape.

Driving this message has drawn off other successful hashtag campaigns including #thankafarmer and #checkthescience. It is proposed that the campaign move on to a public (online) forum using the hashtag #letstalk. Again, this is an already popular hashtag which resonates into the mainstream arena.

We also are moving into the discussion around 'regulation by stealth' which is built into the 2019 Act.

While mainstream media is important because it talks to the politicians, we want to talk to everyday Queenslanders/ Australians and get their support for the farmers who feed them, so we are focusing on social media.

Overall, the Facebook pages being used have had a reach of more than eight million across Queensland and Australia during the campaign to date.

The petition information has also been going out through the farming channels, and we thank everyone for pushing hard around this. It is only right that farmers support this campaign, which will benefit everyone as the mainstream voter voice makes itself heard by politicians.

MACKAY SUGAR TERMINAL REROOFING UNDER WAY

Mackay's sugar terminal is getting a \$12 million facelift, with work underway to replace 330 tonnes of roof sheeting on one of its sugar sheds.

Sugar Terminals Limited is working with Mackay-based firm V2R Projects to deliver the upgrade which will extend the life of Shed 1 by at least 40 years.

The seven-month project began in February 2020. Ageing roofing on one of the four sheds at the site is being replaced with new aluminium cladding. The project will also upgrade and strengthen structural steel elements of the 300-metre long shed, which can store up to 130,000 tonnes of raw sugar.

Mackay cane grower and Non-executive Director for STL, **Tony Bartolo**, said the project was on track for completion in September.

"STL's \$12 million investment is in good hands. Principal contractor V2R Projects and other regional contractors such as DGH Engineering are applying their knowledge and experience to extend the life of Mackay sugar terminal," Mr Bartolo said.

V2R Projects Managing Director **Shaun McBain** said the work was technically challenging with 'high risk' activities taking place over 18,000 square metres of roofing.

"It's a technical job, with a lot of the work taking place 20 metres up in the air and a team of more than 60 now on site to ensure the facilities remain operational throughout the annual sugar crushing season," Mr McBain said.

This project is part of STL's \$100 million capital program to replace roof sheeting across its six bulk sugar storage and export facilities in Queensland. It underscores STL's ongoing commitment to invest in upgraded infrastructure to support the sugar industry and jobs in regional Queensland. ■



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CANEGROWERS POLICY UPDATE



Mick Quirk

Environment and Sustainability Manager
CANEGROWERS

Report on N management just tip of the iceberg

CANEGROWERS has quantified the huge economic risk to the industry should the intent of the State Government's new regulations on cane farming be fully realised.

Alarming as that report is, it actually represents just one consequence of the systemic problems in the design and implementation of Federal and State government policies for the Reef.

DISPROPORTIONATE EMPHASIS ON WATER QUALITY

The Reef 2050 Plan states that 'the effects of climate change are the most serious and increasing threat to the Reef'. It also states that land-based run-off can amplify these effects.

How important is water quality to Reef health relative to other risk factors? The exposure of the GBR lagoon to flood plumes is generally limited to the inshore area. These areas contain seagrass and coral communities, but the inshore corals represent less than 5% of the total coral area in the GBR.

This starts to put the overall importance of water quality into some perspective, and perspective is missing from the 2050 Reef Plan. For example, this plan allocated 65% of its funds to improvement in catchment water quality. The main drivers of Reef health - climate change, extreme weather - are largely ignored. As the Federal and State governments need to be seen to be doing something, agriculture's influence on water quality has become something of a scapegoat.

WATER QUALITY TARGETS

The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan is based on targets that seek minimal amounts of farm-sourced nitrogen and sediment entering waterways. For example, the overall target for nitrogen is an 80% reduction in farm-sourced N in catchment water each year. Not surprisingly, there is no road map for how these targets can be practically achieved.

UNRELIABLE AND SELECTIVE SYSTEM FOR MEASURING PROGRESS

The Paddock to Reef (P2R) program was designed to measure the benefit of current reef-funded projects on catchment water quality. It therefore sources information from a relatively small number of cane farms, with practices on other farms based on guesstimates. Where a grower has made practice changes in the past, this information is not eligible for P2R. Including it would disrupt the assumptions - a case of not letting reality get in the way of a selective story.

Further, as clearly illustrated in the CANEGROWERS nitrogen report, the 'best practice' in P2R would send growers broke.

A WAY FORWARD

Unsurprisingly, growers are very frustrated by the consistent poor rating of their efforts in Report Cards, and by the increasing levels of regulation. CANEGROWERS has outlined the changes in reef policies and programs required to restore growers' confidence and interest in water quality policies and programs, most recently in our submission and presentations to the Senate inquiry on Reef regulations.

These changes need to come from government. Perhaps the endless surveys and social science studies focused on farmers should be turned instead on influencing and motivating change in those who drive reef policies and programs. ■

The main drivers of Reef health - climate change, extreme weather - are largely ignored. As the Federal and State governments need to be seen to be doing something, agriculture's influence on water quality has become something of a scapegoat.



Warren Males

Head - Economics
CANEGROWERS

Electricity prices – new opportunities

Irrigators rightly looked at the Queensland Competition Authority's (QCA) determination for retail electricity prices in regional Queensland for traditional agricultural tariffs with disappointment.

Despite the lower price of generating electricity and lower network charges, QCA did not reduce prices for the widely-used agricultural tariffs, T62, T65 and T66.

In contrast, QCA reduced regional electricity prices for residential and small business use by 8% and 4.8% respectively, effective 1 July 2020. The price reduction for the secondary load control tariff (T33) was larger, down 15%.

QCA's failure to act on the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) approval for the use of control load tariffs as primary tariffs did not go unnoticed. Responding to CANEGROWERS concerns and noting the new controlled load network tariffs were developed in consultation with industry, Energy Minister Anthony Lynham directed QCA to develop three new controlled load retail tariff as primary tariffs to be available from 1 November 2020.

It is likely that as a primary tariff, the load control tariff will include a monthly supply/service charge as well as a usage charge. It would not surprise to see the monthly supply/service charge to be in the range of \$35 to \$40 per month (similar to that applied to small business tariffs) and the usage charge be similar to the T33 price, 16.3c/kWh.

Feedback from irrigators who participated in Ergon's agricultural tariff trial over the past three years has been positive. Several growers, some using overhead systems others flood irrigation, reported that the control load tariff did not significantly disrupt their irrigation practices.

Feedback from Ergon has also been positive. Reflecting its dynamic approach to load control across regional Queensland, Ergon reports that during the trial, switching occurred no more than 10 times for most customers.

Ergon only sheds load when needed and only in the segment of the network where load shedding is necessary. Load is not shed every day. Ergon prioritises which loads to shed. For example, irrigation loads are the last loads to be shed, other lower priority uses such as hot water systems and swimming pool pumps are the first to be shed. On most days, irrigation pumps were not turned off.

QCA's disappointing electricity price structure for 2020/21 and the forthcoming availability of load control tariffs provide opportunity for irrigators across the industry to review their choice of electricity tariffs for pumping water. The small business flat rate (T20), time-of-use (T22A) and secondary load control (T33) tariffs look increasingly attractive (table).

Some irrigators may find that switching to a business tariff will deliver cost savings compared to the continued use of existing agricultural tariffs. Like those who have participated in the control load trials, many may find that the cost savings significantly outweigh any inconvenience.

CANEGROWERS has worked closely with Energy Queensland to secure more cost-effective electricity tariffs for food and fibre production. The availability of a load control tariff is likely to provide many with significant cost savings. ■

COMMONLY USED ELECTRICITY TARIFFS, 2020-21

Charges		T20	T22A	T33*
Usage				
All	c/kWh	23.258		
Peak 10am-8pm	c/kWh		54.496	
Off-Peak	c/kWh		21.777	
Controlled	c/kWh			16.331
Fixed				
Supply	\$/month	39.014	35.994	

*T33 is a secondary tariff, supply is available at least 18hrs/day

Charges		T62	T65	T66
Usage				
1st 10,000kWh/month	c/kWh	46.516		
Balance 7am-9pm weekdays	c/kWh	39.336		
All other	c/kWh	16.448		
Peak	c/kWh		36.894	
Off-Peak	c/kWh		20.321	
All use	c/kWh			19.338
Fixed				
1st 7.5kW/kW	\$/kW			37.503
Balance/kW	\$/kW			112.759
Service	\$/month	23.862	23.726	52.291

Burn Ashburner
Senior Manager - Industry
CANEGROWERS



Schools are critical to sugarcane's future

Agriculture remains the most diverse job market of any sector in the economy. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the expertise and labour requirements in our sector are constantly challenged.

Further, the rapid pace of digitalisation and mechanisation is changing current roles, education needs and training requirements.

Overlaying all this is the global challenge of feeding and clothing almost 10 billion people by 2050, in a changing climate, while maintaining quality products and nurturing the environment.

Agriculture is and will remain a key employer, particularly in Queensland's regional communities, so it is critical that the awareness, education and employment pathways for our sector are effective.

Other sectors of the economy have significant coordinated campaigns to attract the young people they need. Not only does agriculture not have this kind of campaign, we have actually seen the closure of the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges (QATC)

Agriculture in Queensland and the sugarcane industry need to take proactive steps to compete and retain relevance.

CANEGROWERS is active as a member of the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA), which provides leadership and advice to government, service providers and other organisations on employment, skills, industry training and workforce planning issues on behalf of Queensland's agriculture industries.

CANEGROWERS is also a member of the Primary Industries Education Foundation (PIEFA). One of PIEFA's aims is to provide a source of credible, objective and educational resources for schools to maintain and improve community confidence in Australia's primary industries.

Although the Queensland Government has invested in some of the activities required to progress school engagement, more needs to be done.

To this end, the RJSA has proposed a Queensland Agriculture to Schools Engagement Program (QASEP) to enhance and consolidate school-industry engagement.

It is proposed that the program will actively engage with school communities to build awareness of agriculture's contribution to society.

The program aims to build school-industry partnerships to attract, inspire and provide informed career opportunities for young people to join the agriculture industries and meet their future workforce needs. Program aims will:

- Provide real industry experiences that align with school curriculum and learning priorities
- Promote the industry and its career options to students, educators and careers advisors
- Help future generations to better understand their pathway options to careers in agriculture
- Provide experiential learning to career seekers to explore their potential to work in agricultural industries
- Provide individuals and groups with training and experiences to assist them to start a career in agriculture

This is an ambitious proposal with the objective of contributing to a future, suitably skilled workforce for the sugarcane industry. ■

Agriculture is and will remain a key employer, particularly in Queensland's regional communities, so it is critical that the awareness, education and employment pathways for our sector are effective.



Resolving disputes with a mill owner during the season

In any co-dependent relationship, there are bound to be disputes from time to time. The sugar industry is no different. Sugar mills need viable and profitable cane growers and growers need a viable and profitable mill to process the cane and manufacture sugar. As is typically said now 'We're all in this together'.

Given the complex structure of the industry with the need for efficient season lengths, bell shaped CCS curves, geographical and climatic challenges, rostered harvesting and grouping, relative payment and equity issues, delivery points, not to mention the GEI and cane payment formula, the likelihood of disputes between a mill owner and growers is very real.

From my experience however, the level of dispute between growers and mill owners is actually quite low.

CANE SUPPLY AGREEMENT (CSA)

The terms of the CSA provide and regulate just about everything in the grower/miller relationship.

The CSA will cover the harvesting and delivery arrangements by growers and the transport, crushing, sugar manufacturing and GEI sugar allocation and payment obligations of the mill owner. CSAs must also contain a dispute resolution provision.



*By Chris Cooper,
CANEGROWERS
Legal Advisor*



Typically, such a provision will include steps involving negotiation, mediation and ultimately arbitration.

Some CSAs also include provisions providing for local equity or harvest management committees comprising grower and mill representatives that have the power to resolve disputes about things like allotments, grouping and delivery point changes.

STEPS FOR RESOLUTION

Direct negotiations with the relevant mill representative are a good starting point.

If the dispute can not be resolved directly then consider the terms of the CSA to see what dispute resolution processes are available.

In many cases, just because the mill says no, does not mean no. Avenues of review or appeal against a mill decision may be available.

CANEGROWERS ASSISTANCE

One of the many benefits of membership of CANEGROWERS and having it act as the grower's bargaining representative, is that the grower has access to the knowledge, skill and experience of the local CANEGROWERS team, led by its Board, Chairman and District Manager.

Negotiating with mills and resolving disputes for and on behalf of growers is core business for CANEGROWERS.

The local office can provide advice and assistance on a dispute and the options available under the CSA or otherwise.

In addition, districts can access the knowledge and experience of the CANEGROWERS office in Brisbane and legal advice and assistance can be provided to support the grower in the dispute with the mill.

All of this support service comes as part of the membership of CANEGROWERS - we've got your back!

FURTHER INFORMATION

Any CANEGROWERS member wishing to discuss any aspect of legal matters should contact their local CANEGROWERS office or call me on Free Call 1800 177 159, for free initial legal advice. ■

BLOCKCHAIN – a pathway for sustainable sugar?

Blockchain - it's one of those buzzwords you'll hear from time to time. But what is it, really?

Recently, I was chatting to a couple of mates about the work CANEGROWERS is doing with blockchain to ensure the traceability of sustainably-produced sugar through the supply chain.

After a minute, one mate wandered off to get a drink (blockchain can have that effect on some people), but my other mates' curiosity was piqued. He thought blockchain was the same thing as a cryptocurrency, like Bitcoin.

"But blockchain is not Bitcoin," I explained. "It's the underlying technology that enables Bitcoin. Bitcoin creates a token and uses blockchain technology to make it tradable."

Blockchain technology uses a distributed ledger to keep records and track information. Information is combined to create a block. Adding one block of information to another block creates a chain of blocks. To add new records, you create a new block and add it to the chain.

The blocks of information are transacted on a digital ledger which allows for the traceability of the chain of data. The innovative part of blockchain technology is that once the records are created, they cannot be changed.

Using ledgers to keep records is not new. Blockchain uses a digital ledger, which is decentralised and synchronised across multiple computers and across multiple locations. This builds a distributed system and makes the data immutable, which creates trust.

Only those with permission can view the parts of the data they have permission to view. This creates accountability and transparency.

"So how is CANEGROWERS using Blockchain?" my mate asks.

"Well, take that soft drink in your hand," I say. "Using blockchain technology, the sugar in your drink can be traced back through the supply chain to where it was produced and how the sugarcane was grown.

"So why is that important!?" he asks.

"Maybe that's not important to you," I respond. "But there are consumers asking where their food comes from. They want to ensure it is produced in a sustainable and socially responsible way. Blockchain can show that.

"Consumers, marketers, sugar traders and food manufacturers are also asking if the sugar

going into the food and beverages is sustainably produced. Many food manufacturers have sustainable sourcing goals and targets and are looking for programs to meet their targets."

CANEGROWERS is investigating whether we can combine blockchain technology with our Smartcane BMP program. This would demonstrate to consumers that sugarcane is being produced sustainably on farms using our independently-audited best management practice program.

Blockchain then helps to trace the sugar from the grower who grew the sugarcane, to the mill which produces the sugar, to the refiner and then the customer who bought the product.

CANEGROWERS is coordinating the Sustainable Sugar Project to investigate digital technology solutions for the Queensland sugar industry. This work is funded through a Smart Farming Grant from the Australian Government.

Since 2018, CANEGROWERS has been working with KPMG to investigate how blockchain technology using the KPMG Origins platform can trace sugar through the sugar supply chain.

It can be done.

CANEGROWERS has created a digital supply chain map of the Queensland sugar industry, which identifies the data points that can be used for a blockchain solution. The data from across the supply chain was then used to build a prototype which is being tested with growers, millers, marketers and stakeholders. Their feedback is being collated to refine the prototype.

The benefit and value to the grower and broader industry is they could show how they are meeting consumer expectations, demonstrate traceability of a high quality product for a food company, leverage improved market access or preferential access from the trader asking for sustainable sourced sugar, and create additional value from sustainability credentials.

"Sounds interesting!" my mate says. "So is the sugar in my drink sustainably produced?"

It could well be. There is more evaluation to do, but one day we might be able to say, it's made from sustainably produced sugar that has come from Mackay. ■



By Matt Kealley,
CANEGROWERS Senior
Manager - Membership
Engagement & Innovation

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Harvest Rag tyres 16.9 R28 \$600 ONO each.
20.8 R 38 \$1,500 ONO each. Bonel 3PL 1
tonne Side Dresser SS \$6,000 ONO. Ph:
0417791904.

2004 Cameco Harvester VGC \$150,000 incl.
GST. Ph: 0427655168.

HBM Plant Cutter (GC) \$2000. Cane Blower
\$600. Confidor Applicator, single row
\$600. All prices incl. GST. Innisfail area. Ph:
0488515259.

7ft Slasher, dual rubber wheels, heavy duty,
very good condition, new PTO shaft, 110 HP
gear box, \$5,500 incl. GST. Ph: 0408770054.

1x Massey Ferguson 6475 6t side tipping
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Ph: 0740562063.

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J-250 Full Stick Harvester, Don Gough
Planter, Double Disc Opener Planter, Thrash
Blower with Topper, Six Trailers. \$4000+GST
for the lot. Ph: 0437346341.

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Trash incorporator; double row marker
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trash rakes; 3-row multi-weeder; cutaways;
rippers; disc offsets; grubbers for ratoonings
& fallow; slasher; cane break pushers;
3-row stool splitter with gal fert box. Ph:
0417612883.

LOADER: 1993 Komatsu WA470-1, ROPS,
4.2m³ bucket, 21T operating weight, UHF
radio \$35,000+GST. Ph: 0419700761.

IVECO: 2004 Iveco Eurotech Prime Mover,
automatic transmission airbag suspension,
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Austoft 7700, 1990 model, very tidy machine. In last 2000hr had rebuilt motor sunstrand track pumps & motors new chopper shaft & bearings, new air con condenser & dryer, tracks are good \$32,000. Austoft 6000 wheeled harvester good for age \$8,000 ONO. 2.5t single tipping bin \$1,200. All +GST. Ph: 0428611714.

Telstra Tough Max 3 phone: \$499 incl GST. Unlocked, brand new - has not been used. SIM not included. Dust & water resistant, 64GB internal memory. Includes charger & USB cable. Ph: 0419640545.

95' single axle, 10 tonne Carta double door elevating bin. VGC. New Tyres. \$45,000 +GST. Ph: 0417427480.

12t self-propelled 6x6 elev infielder. Very good condition. Mackay. Ph: 0438606578.

6t side tipper on Leyland tandem. Good condition. Mackay. Ph: 0438606578.

Don Mizzi 741 model on Fiat 750 special turbo plus MF102 half-tracks to suit. Mackay. Ph: 0438606578.

Celli Tiger spike hoe, 2.5m wide with hydraulic crumble roller and oil cooler. Very good condition. Mackay. Ph: 0438606578.

6t side tipper Ian Ritchie, Excellent condition \$15,000 + GST. Ph: 0478719294.

Track transporter; 2x6t side tippers; V10 Mercedes motor; Robot running gear. All GC. Ph: 0427617807.

2016 Case 8800 Track Machine, 2200 Hours, EHS 8 Blade Choppers, Trimble GPS, Blackey Bisalloy elevator floors, Standard Topper, 2 speed wheel motors, Pro Rata Engine Warranty. Very tidy machine. Ph: 0428182464 or 0427541030.

Hodge Inter-row Fertiliser Applicator (tows behind 4 wheeler) \$3,700. Carryall, Extra Heavy Duty, 1800mm W x 800mm D x 850mm H, quick hitch set up \$1,500. Ph: 0428236165.

Bundaberg-Rocky Point

Farmall-AV \$5,500. Whole stick planter, Whole stick cutter & Cotton King \$1,500 for all; Trailco irrigator & hose reel \$6,000. Trash incorporator \$10,000. All + GST. Ph: 0419577110.

2x BSM 6t Double Side Tipper Bins \$55,000 each. LG 6t Single Side Tipper Bin \$8,000. All + GST. Located Childers. Ph: 0401260670.

800L Silvan tank with 8.5m Yannie Creek boom, electric controls, unused spray hoods, H/D invin legs, as new \$9000. Arched toolbar with s tynes \$800. Bonel 1 ton fert bin, stainless worm with 2 1/2" toolbar, 1

1/4" coil tynes \$1500. 800L Silvan tank with pump & 2 way controls \$1500. Bonel wholestick planter GC offers. All + GST. Ph: 0427629434.

1999 9 tonne elevating Austoft power haul, remanned engine, pumps overhauled, new cross conveyor. 1992 & 1994 9 tonne elevating Austoft power hauls in good condition. Ph: 0407629427.

Toft 6000 harvester. 1995 model Kubota M-75-80 DT tractor. Yeomans ripper. 1/2 yd scoop. 2/3 yd scoop. Wallaville area. Ph Mike on weekends: 0421127724.

Old grey bonel 3 furrow disc plow. Criton Mark 2 Harvester with 135 Massey Ferguson Tractor attached. 2x 6000 Austoft

Harvester Elevator Slews and 1 Ram. Quantity of elevator flights to suit Austoft Cane Harvesters 4000 & 6000. Hydraulic Wheel Motor to fit Austoft Cane Harvesters 4000 & 6000, as new condition. Quantity of commercial pumps and motors to suit Austoft Cane Harvester 4000, 6000 & Mark 1. Diff and Episicals to suit Austoft Harvester Mark 1 and Mark 2. Dyna Power motors and pumps. Quantity of 5 inch irrigation pipes. Topper to suit Austoft Harvesters 6000 & 7000. Ph: 0427598333.

Rainfall Report

Brought to you by Sunsuper

Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)			Average rainfall (mm)
	Month prior (Jun 2020)	Month to date (1 Jul-26 Jul)	Year to date	Jan-Jul
Whyanbeel Valley (Mossman)	47.2	61.2	1,518.6	2,284.2
Mareeba Airport	4.2	0.4	465.4	662.1
Cairns Aero	37.4	33.8	1,163.6	1,619.4
Mt Sophia	135	79	1,888	2,664.2
Babinda Post Office	182.5	152.1	2,416.7	3,402.2
Innisfail	253.2	84.4	2,428.5	2,838.4
Tully Sugar Mill	226.6	144.2	2,537.3	3,286
Cardwell Marine Pde	24.2	47.5	1,396.2	1,683.8
Lucinda Township	77.9	42	1,652.5	1,715.4
Ingham Composite	33.1	38.9	1,602	1,640.7
Abergowrie Alert	6	8	578	1,127.4
Townsville Aero	17.8	15	774.8	900.2
Ayr DPI Research Stn	1	62.8	1,021.2	736.4
Proserpine Airport	12.4	54.2	751.8	1,111.1
Mirani Mary Street	20.2	36.4	928.2	1,129.8
Mackay MO	53.8	37.6	1,113.8	1,225.8
Plane Creek Sugar Mill	0	0	1,012.6	1,337.3
Bundaberg Aero	26.6	22.4	443.8	648.8
Childers South	33.8	34.6	386.4	550.3
Maryborough	34	59.4	632	773.6
Tewantin RSL Park	105	126.6	1,224.8	1,069.8
Eumundi - Crescent Rd	69.2	28.2	1,108.6	1,178.9
Nambour DPI - Hillside	55.6	120.6	1,243.6	1,263.9
Logan City Water Treatment Plant	52.3	101	886.6	706.2
Murwillumbah Bray Park	102.8	117.8	1,369.4	1,094.2
Ballina Airport	139.8	139.2	1,528.8	1,231.3
New Italy (Woodburn)	65.8	115.8	1,239.9	911



dream with
your eyes open

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 sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology Recent Rainfall Tables.

Wanted

Massey Ferguson 4WD tractor: low to reasonable hrs; 160-180 hp; wide tyres. Mackay area. Ph: 0417542783.

Whole stick cane trailer. Mackay region. Ph Charles: 0418159998.

Landplane working condition. Ingham area. Ph Rick: 0429182192.

STL shares wanted. Ph: 0408448227.

Positions Vacant

Position available for a farmer looking for a few days work a month. Job involves spot spraying guinea grass and other various tractor jobs. Would suit a small grower

wanting more work. Tully area. Phone Michael for further details: 0400062889.

Sales & Spare Part Rep position at NQAS. An exciting opportunity within our Tully branch on a full-time basis. Must be a self-starter, results oriented & have a solid commitment to deliver customer service and spare parts advice on a daily basis. Email your CV to phaedra.crowle@nqas.com.au

Property

Pleystowe cane farm. On 2 Lots. Approx 190 acres all up. Teemburra water, 2 pumps & licences, plus 32,000 gallons an hour underground bore. Machinery/irrigation shed. 2x 4" soft hose irrigators, farm lasered,

underground main throughout. 2 sidings adjoin farms. Access to farm from Pleystowe School Rd & Formosa's Rd. Does not include 2019 crop. Selling due to health reasons. Ph: 0408733793.

Tropical Paradise Cane Farm/Equestrian Training Property, 96 acres 6klms to PORT DOUGLAS. All farmable land, 70 acres producing quality cane, 25 acres set up for horses. Easy farm to maintain. Ph: Mandy 0408880724.

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