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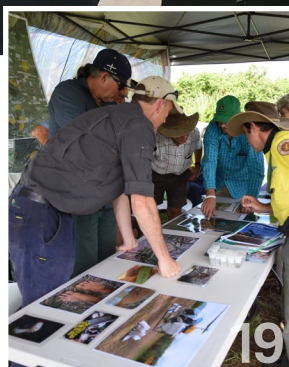
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COVER IMAGE: Mackay cane grower Faron Bowman believes harvesting technology abandoned by manufacturers 30 years ago could help improve modern harvester efficiency. Read more on page 14. (Pictured with his wife Andrea and sons Calan and Clae)

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Time to tackle destructive subsidies

By Paul Schembri, Chairman CANEGROWERS

"We are contemplating an action in the WTO to seek a formal end to these export subsidies. It will take time but we have been down this path before and been successful."

The Australian sugar industry is highly exposed to the global sugar price – possibly more exposed than any other sugar industry in the world. So, when the global price heads south it can have a serious economic impact.

World sugar prices are currently languishing at around 11 to 12c/lb US, returning to Australian producers a sugar price below the costs of production.

Low sugar prices are not new. In fact, the ebb and flow of sugar prices is part of the industry landscape.

What everyone wants to know is how long we will have to wait for a price recovery. While no one knows the answer to that question, it seems likely that the global surplus will remain for some time.

The world sugar price is a function of supply and demand. However, current low prices are also being fuelled by export subsidies, principally in India and Pakistan.

Export subsidies "pump prime" extra production that otherwise wouldn't exist. They also link the world price to government intervention, which in turn guarantees low prices.

What countries do to support their farmers is a matter for sovereign governments.

If that support is confined to that country's domestic needs then it has little impact on us.

But when that "pump priming" of production finds its way into the export arena, it has a serious impact on exporting countries such as Australia, Brazil and Thailand.

What can we do about the current low price?

While there is little we can do about global supply and demand, we can do something about export subsidies.

The sugar industries of Australia, Brazil and Thailand, along with their respective government officials, met last week in New York to consider the export subsidy issue from India and Pakistan.

We are now contemplating an action in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to seek a formal end to these export subsidies.

There is much legal, financial and administrative preparatory work required to bring about an application to the WTO.

The last time Australia, Brazil and Thailand teamed up to make such an application against export subsidies, we were successful.

That action, in 2004, prevented as much as six million tonnes of sugar annually being exported by Europe and ushered in a period of world sugar prices that gave better returns to efficient producers such as Australia.

The current low price is clearly creating economic damage to our industry. The price will ultimately turn northward, but it will take time.

What's important is that we are in concert with the other large exporters of sugar, particularly Brazil and Thailand, and are going to do what we need to do to end the export subsidies that are contributing to the lower world price.

It will take time but we have been down this path before and been successful. ■





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NEWS IN BRIEF

Calls to investigate sugar subsidies

The Global Sugar Alliance, including Australia, has called in lawyers to investigate whether India and Pakistan are exporting subsidised sugar and pushing the world price below our cost of production.

"It's one thing to have the price bearing a reflection of world supply and demand," CANEGROWERS Chairman **Paul Schembri** said.

"But we can't afford having countries that are subsidising their producers oversupplying the market and depressing the price further.

"There's little we can do about supply and demand but we can have a bearing on international trade and particularly in relation to World Trade Organisation rules, so representatives of the Australian industry and government have met in New York with representatives of the Brazilian and Thai sugar industries."

"We've started a preliminary examination of what we think is going on in India

and Pakistan and I guess we'll have to progress it through with governments to put a case to the WTO."

The three countries are members of the Global Sugar Alliance and CANEGROWERS Head Economics **Warren Males** is the Secretary of the organisation which represents 85% of world cane sugar exports.

"Fuelled by a glut of government supported sugar originating from Pakistan, and the threat of subsidised Indian sugar exports, the world sugar (ICE #11) has dropped 20% so far in 2018 to a level not seen since the European Union sugar export subsidy program was brought into alignment with its WTO obligations a decade ago," he said.

In 2004, Australia, Thailand and Brazil took a case that Europe was dumping highly subsidised sugar onto the world market to the WTO and the case was successful.

"As an Australian producer I don't really mind what people do in their own countries if they want to subsidise their farmers in terms of their own domestic market that's fine but where it overflows into the world market it's a serious situation," Mr Schembri said.

Trade lawyers are looking at the degree to which current and proposed domestic support programs and export subsidies may contravene WTO rules.

The Global Sugar Alliance issued a statement after the New York meeting urging India and Pakistan to abide by commitments they had previously made to end practices which distort the world sugar market.

Read the statement on the CANEGROWERS website <https://bit.ly/2lvndZ4> ■

CLEARING CATEGORY X VEGETATION - GROWERS BEWARE

A recent court decision has highlighted that growers need to check both Queensland legislation and local government regulations before undertaking any vegetation clearing work.

The Planning and Environment Court on 20 April determined that a landholder in the Moreton Regional Council area did not have complete freedom to clear Category X vegetation.

It found that although the relevant state legislation provided that clearing Category X vegetation could be undertaken as of right, without any government approvals, the local council could override that entitlement under its planning scheme.



This means a local council planning scheme can specify that clearing of Category X vegetation is assessable development and require the landholder to seek approval from the council.

It would be prudent for any cane growers intending to clear Category X vegetation to check their local council planning scheme before acting.

It would also be advisable to request a property report from the Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy for your specific area.

The report and all maps are free, and you will receive information outlining the requirements for clearing vegetation on your land.

The Queensland legislation covering vegetation management has also recently changed.

CANEGROWERS is preparing detailed information for members on the controversial amendments. ■



Pictured: David Rynne ASMC and Warren Males CANEGROWERS with David Brightling, Counsellor (Trade), in the red tie and Kiran Karamil, Adviser (Agriculture) on the left, from the Australian Embassy in the USA

World platform for Australian growers



CANEGROWERS has represented Australian sugarcane growers at the annual meeting of the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers, held in Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

WABCG represents around four million farmers in 32 countries.

Chairman **Paul Schembri** was invited to give an address on trade, particularly the importance Australian cane growers place on being involved in policy development and lobbying.

"Not surprisingly, the spectre of low world sugar prices dominated the mood of the meeting," Mr Schembri said. "All of the sugar producing countries are struggling at the moment."

"One of the amazing features of global sugar meetings is the similarity of issues facing sugar producers worldwide."

"Beet and cane growers worldwide see their future as not only sugar producers but also accessing additional income streams through value-adding to their crops."

"The sugar tax debate is also global and every country is developing strategies to counter the negative perceptions around of sugar in our diets."

"Certainly, it is a long way to go to attend a meeting but it is important for Australia, and for grower representatives to understand the changing nature of the global sugar industry and to meet with and learn from our international colleagues."

What to do if your harvester brings down powerlines

1 **STAY** in the harvester. Call 000 immediately.

2 If there's an immediate danger, like fire, and evacuation is **ABSOLUTELY** necessary, assess your escape route and check for fallen powerlines.

3 Exit the harvester by jumping – make sure to land with both feet together.

4 When jumping, **don't touch the harvester and the ground at the same time.**

5 Once you've landed with both feet together (be careful not to stumble or fall), jump or shuffle with your feet together away from the harvester.

6 Move in this way until you are at least 10 metres away from the harvester. **DO NOT go back.**

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ERGON ENERGY NETWORK

2018 CANEGROWERS Levy Schedule

As a grower-led organisation, CANEGROWERS uses its resources to work on your behalf on issues prioritised by members through Policy Council.

During the 2017 State Election a television campaign and a program of lobbying by CANEGROWERS highlighted the key issues for growers – electricity prices, grower choice in marketing and sustainability programs without regulation. A summary of the responses from the political parties is on the CANEGROWERS website and we are holding them to their commitments.

CANEGROWERS rallied and coordinated the efforts of staff and members when an attempt to disallow the Sugar Industry Code of Conduct was launched last year, going to Canberra to educate Senators about the grower protections in the Code and ensuring the motion was defeated.

CANEGROWERS secured the timely and coordinated delivery of assistance to growers affected by Cyclone Debbie and organised a tour of government officials to explain the rules for moving farm machinery on roads.

With more than 70% of Queensland's cane area in the Smartcane BMP program, CANEGROWERS ensures its environmental credentials are recognised internationally. We make our critics, including HRH Prince Charles, aware of members' achievements and commitment.

CANEGROWERS will continue to work for you and your business through a strong level of grower membership. Thank You for your ongoing support.

The CANEGROWERS Board has maintained a minimum increase to its annual state levy for general administrative purposes, adopting an increase in line with CPI of 1.9%, declaring the 2018 season state levy at 18.25c per tonne (2017: 17.91c). The levy is deducted progressively through the crushing season from cane payments.

Below is a table of total membership fees after combining the state and local district charges.■

Total Membership Fees - 2018 season (cents per tonne of cane)

District Company	Crop Insurance	Total Membership Fees (inc. GST)
Bundaberg	TBA	TBA
Burdekin	1.54	50.37
Cairns - Babinda	TBA	42.63**
Cairns - Mulgrave	TBA	42.63**
Herbert River	TBA	44.17**
Innisfail	Note 1	49.58
Isis	TBA	TBA
Mackay	TBA	TBA
Maryborough	Note 1	33.83
Mossman	2.00	36.03
Plane Creek	TBA	TBA
Proserpine	Note 1	37.68
Rocky Point	3.70	71.45
Tableland - Mossman Mill	TBA	TBA
Tableland - Tableland Mill	TBA	TBA
Tully	2.50	33.61

**excludes crop insurance as rate has not yet been set

NOTE 1 - no additional charge for crop insurance, included as part of general fee. TBA - District Board has not yet set their fee for 2017. Total levy to be advised. This fee schedule will apply to cane supplied to Queensland mills during the 2018 crushing season. Fees vary from district to district due to the size and extent of operations and services offered.

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Smartcane BMP adoption

WHAT'S THE ECONOMIC IMPACT?

An economic analysis of BMP adoption has shown **Adrian Darveniza** the impact improved farming practices have had to his bottom line.

Like many farmers, Adrian had read the magazine articles, been to field days, and spoken to extension officers about the benefits of practices such as fallowing, widening wheel spacings and fine-tuning nutrient and herbicide applications.

Farming 240 hectares of sugarcane near the South Johnstone mill, the family have been quick to adopt new technologies and innovations down through the years.

Adrian, who returned to the farm in 2003, and took over as manager in 2010. Building on the previous work of his father, he has implemented a range of best management practices that have seen the farm gain Smartcane BMP accreditation.

The changes included moving from a 1.5m to 1.8m wheel spacing, moving from plough-out/replant to include a bare fallow at the end of the crop cycle, following the SIX EASY STEPS for determining nutrient requirements and working with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) on constructing a dual-herbicide sprayer.

The transition of sugarcane growers towards BMP adoption was the subject of a project funded by SRA and investigated by DAF (and Lifecycles) to evaluate the economic (and environmental) implications of Smartcane BMP adoption.

The project examined six farms in different areas to provide a snapshot of the economic impact of BMP adoption.

Analysis of the Darveniza farm showed an annual improvement in farm operating return of \$160/ha, or about \$38,000/year, as a result of lower operating costs and productivity increases after BMP adoption.

The economic analysis indicated that the biggest contributing factors to the farm's operating costs were:

- Fertiliser costs down by \$103/ha (a 64% contribution to the overall change in operating costs);
- Fuel, oil, and labour down by \$19/ha (12% contribution);
- Herbicides down by \$19/ha (12 percent);



- Planting and harvesting down by \$14/ha (9%).

While making various BMP changes, Adrian also shifted to wider row spacings.

"For us, it wasn't a big expense shifting to wider row spacings," Adrian said. "We already had a high-rise tractor that was on 1.8 metres, so everything else was easy to widen."

Between the wide rows and the dual herbicide sprayer (which is now a triple herbicide sprayer) he is spending less time driving back to the shed.

"Previously, I was probably getting about 4ha of spraying done at a time, while now it is 7ha, so I know I have to take something to eat or I'll be getting hungry," he said.

"The economic analysis showed me the sprayer is saving me money and time, and giving a better kill with the weeds. The glyphosate in the middle of the row kills everything and does a magic job on weeds like Singapore daisy and sedges, as it floods regularly here and we have a relentless problem with weeds.

"The glyphosate is killing the weeds that normally laugh at the Gramoxone / diuron mix."

Adrian has converted the sprayer to three tanks: one spraying the inter-row, one spraying the row, and one over the top of everything.

"We have some vines and weeds that grow very fast and germinate before the grasses.

"To catch them with the Irvine legs we would have to spray early – but then the grasses haven't germinated, which would mean a second pass or returning later with the boom.

"This way we can wait for the grasses to germinate, and clean up the weeds that are too high. We just switch on the over-the-top tank as we need it."

Modifications to machinery were necessary to enable the practice changes on Adrian's farm. The cost of implementation for Adrian's particular circumstances were only \$2200 or about \$9/ha.

Research has indicated that cane yields can increase considerably in response to a well-managed fallow period.

Adrian has progressively improved his fallow management and is now trialling legumes as a break crop. He has had good results with mill mud, which he said was easy with the mill being almost on his doorstep and that has reduced his fertiliser costs overall.

- SRA acknowledges the funding contribution from DAF Queensland towards this research activity. ■

Pictured: Smartcane BMP accredited grower Adrian Darveniza with his tri-herbicide sprayer.

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Policy Update

Industry with Burn Ashburner

Economics with Warren Males

Transport rules changing

Consultation on a harmonised national notice for Class 1 Agricultural Vehicles and Combinations are progressing slowly but the signs for agriculture are encouraging.

The National Farmers Federation has put a proposal to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) that, among other issues, covers the determination of zones with similar road and traffic conditions and what is considered to be practical and safe access dimensions for ag vehicles.

NHVR has communicated this to all participating state, including Queensland, and is awaiting a reply. Ultimately the states and regional councils need to agree and this is taking time.

However, we do have an undertaking that conditions for access to public roads will not be more restrictive than they are currently in Queensland. In the meantime, it is business as usual with the current regulations.



Chain of Responsibility

On another issue, as part of the heavy vehicle supply chain, primary producers play an important role in supporting safe, reliable road transport for the benefit of all road users.

Changes to the Chain of Responsibility (CoR) laws will align them more closely with workplace health and safety provisions meaning that all parties in the chain, including primary producers, must reduce risks related to transport tasks.

Although the laws are changing, they will only apply to activities that a person or business has responsibility for and could influence. In other words, no one will be liable for breaches they cannot control.

For cane growers this means it becomes more important to have a written harvesting contract and an induction process for contractors with a suitable clause to cover CoR. The NHVR website has more information. ■



Increasing revenue opportunities and reducing costs

The glut of government-supported sugar originating from Pakistan, and the threat of subsidised Indian sugar exports, have driven this year's 20% fall in world sugar prices.

This, together with the subsidies that continue to support surplus sugar production in Europe, was a motivation for the Global Sugar Alliance meeting that I was privileged to chair in New York.

Assessments of whether government supports in India, Pakistan and the EU violate World Trade Organisation restrictions are compelling and detailed technical legal work will be done by mid-July.

"Trade rules are important. Ensuring compliance with those rules reduces market distortions and supports world prices. The Global Sugar Alliance is working with governments to use diplomatic and WTO channels to bring about change."

India is also under pressure over gains with the United States formally asking questions in the WTO about its support programs for wheat and rice.

Trade rules are important. Ensuring compliance with those rules reduces market distortions and supports world prices. The Global Sugar Alliance is working with governments to use diplomatic and WTO channels to bring about change.

Consumer Reference Group

At home, the Consumer Reference Group finalised its report to the Australian Energy Regulator Rate of Return Guideline Review.

CANEGROWERS was influential in the development of the report and its recommendations.

The report outlines why consumers are being charged too much for electricity, questions the AER's exercise of its regulatory national discretion, and proposes a fundamental review of the guideline after the current incremental review is complete. ■





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Grow a better tomorrow.

Grower rep feedback helps shape QSL focus



QSL's Grower Representative Members from around the state gathered in Brisbane this month for their annual workshop.

The event, hosted by QSL at its Brisbane headquarters, updated participants on QSL's key achievements and business activities from the past year, and sought their feedback on current QSL products and services, as well as potential initiatives.

QSL CEO and Managing Director Greg Beashel said the unique perspective and input provided by each representative was invaluable.

"Our work with the QSL Grower Representative Members helps to ensure that every milling district throughout the state has a strong voice at the QSL table," Mr Beashel said.

"By regularly checking in with this important group and other growers throughout the state, we're making sure that QSL's goals and activities reflect the priorities of the industry we serve."

QSL has 23 Grower Representative Members, with two representatives appointed by the Australian Cane Farmers Association Limited (ACFA) and

Queensland Cane Growers Organisation Limited (QCGO) and 21 Elected Holders.

Every Elected Holder is a grower who owns or leases a sugar cane farm in each of QSL's 21 designated mill areas, who has been elected by other growers in their region.

QSL Grower Representative Members serve three-year terms, with the most recent elections held in 2017.

Your current representatives are:

MILL AREA	QSL GROWER REPRESENTATIVE MEMBER
Mossman	Gerard Puglisi
Tableland	Nirmal Chohan
Mulgrave	Jeff Day
Northern Region (South Johnstone)	Barry Stubbs
Tully	Tom Harney
Herbert River	Michael Pisano
Burdekin	Mark Vass, Owen Menkens, Russell Jordan & Roger Piva
Proserpine	Mark Blair
Central (Mackay)	Frank Perna, Tony Ross, Greg Plath
Plane Creek	Kevin Borg
Southern (Bundaberg)	Kelvin Griffin & Allan Dingle
Isis	Joe Russo
Maryborough	Jeff Atkinson
Rocky Point	Richard Skopp
QCGO appointment	Paul Schembri
ACFA appointment	Don Murday

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2018-Season QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool prices

The floor and strike prices for the 2018-Season QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool have now been established at the following levels:

FLOOR PRICE

The absolute minimum gross price is:

355.00 AUD/tonne ACTUAL

342.33 AUD/tonne IPS

STRIKE PRICE

The strike price is:

365.00 AUD/tonne ACTUAL

351.98 AUD/tonne IPS

A participation rate of 50% applies when the market exceeds the Strike Price.

For details regarding the 2018 QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool, please read the full Pricing Pool Terms available at: www.qsl.com.au.

QSL Advances update

The QSL Board has confirmed the remaining QSL Advances payments for the 2017 Season (*Table 1 below*).

The June payment will be based on estimated pool values as of 25 May 2018, with the final payment date for all 2017-Season QSL pools and pricing platforms to be made on Friday 20 July 2018.

The indicative QSL Advances program for the 2018 Season has also been announced (*Table 2 below*), with the initial payment rate confirmed at 60% to be paid on indicative pool values as of 11 May 2018.

It is important to note that the program is indicative only in its entirety and should not be taken as a commitment by QSL with regard to either the Advance rate or date of increase. The program may also change during the season depending on movements in the marketing and shipping plans, sugar price and currency movements and the timing of cash flows.

The QSL Board will next review the indicative 2018-Season program at its July meeting, where the August 2018 Advance rate increase will be considered.

TABLE 1: 2017 - Season QSL Advances

APPLICABLE FROM	QSL STANDARD ADVANCE RATE	QSL ACCELERATED ADVANCE RATE
20 June 2018	97.5%	97.5%
20 July 2018	100%	100%

TABLE 2: 2018 - Season QSL Advances

APPLICABLE FROM*	QSL STANDARD ADVANCE RATE	QSL ACCELERATED ADVANCE RATE**
Initial	60%	60%
22 August 2018	65%	65%
17 October 2018	70%	70%
21 November 2018	72.5%	72.5%
12 December 2018	75%	90%
23 January 2019	80%	90%
20 February 2019	82.5%	90%
20 March 2019	87.5%	90%
17 April 2019	90%	90%
15 May 2019	92.5%	92.5%
19 June 2019	95%	95%
By 30 July 2019 (date to be confirmed)	100%	100%

* These dates are when QSL makes payments to its milling suppliers to pass on to growers. However, miller and bank processing times may result in later local payment arrangements for growers.

** Accelerated Advances is offered for Growers participating in the QSL Target Price Pool, Individual Futures Contract Pool and Guaranteed Floor Pool on an opt-in basis.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

COULD PAST INNOVATIONS HELP IMPROVE MODERN HARVESTER EFFICIENCY?

By Wayne Griffin

For more than 20 years Faron Bowman has been stripping down and rebuilding harvesters. But the Mackay cane grower says one innovation above all others has helped dramatically reduce his in-field losses, while also cutting down the quantity of dirt and extraneous matter ending up in his cane bins.

A sixth-generation cane grower, Faron farms around 280 hectares of cane on a 400 ha property at Erakala, 10 minutes west of Mackay, on the banks of the Pioneer River.

With the help of his cousin Dave, the 49-year-old plants, sprays and cuts his own crop, averaging around 112 tonnes per ha annually.

When he's not out in the paddock, you'll most likely find him in the shed, tinkering with one of his harvesters.

"Over the years we've changed all sorts of stuff on these machines," Faron explained when *Australian Canegrower* visited the Bowman Family farm recently.

"We've changed the front, we changed the rollers, the augers, we did heaps of modifications inside with the pumps and the hydraulics and all that."

Faron even claims credit for Case IH's decision to release a widened Austoft harvester in the late 90s.

"Back in 1997 I decided to widen our harvester. We'd a fair bit of dual row cane here at the time and I couldn't get the cane up the front of it," he said.

"It was the first ever Toft in the country to be widened. A few months later the Toft guys came out to inspect it and the very next year a prototype widened Toft was rolled out of the factory."

However, the most important modification that Faron has made to his harvesters, the one that makes them different to most others in the industry at present, is the basecutter box.

Whereas today's harvesters use leg basecutter boxes, Faron has equipped his harvesters with a type of underslung basecutter box that manufacturers stopped using in the 1990's.

"The reason we did it is because there's a lot of dramas with mills complaining about dirt and extraneous matter, stools, mud and all the rest of it. You name it, they're whinging about it," he said.

"In my opinion, it's the leg boxes that cause all those problems. ►





"What the does is congregate all the dirt and matter you don't want and push it through the centre of the machine. "

"If you look at a standard harvester, because of those leg boxes you've only got around 14 inches width for the cut cane to pass through.

"So what that does is congregate all the dirt and matter you don't want and pushes it through the centre of the machine.

"It wears all the rollers out up the middle. When it goes through the choppers it wears a big bow in them because all the cane is going through the middle of the chopper instead of going through the full width of the knife.

"It also means you're getting a big blob coming out through the extractor, which is a lot harder for the machine to clean."

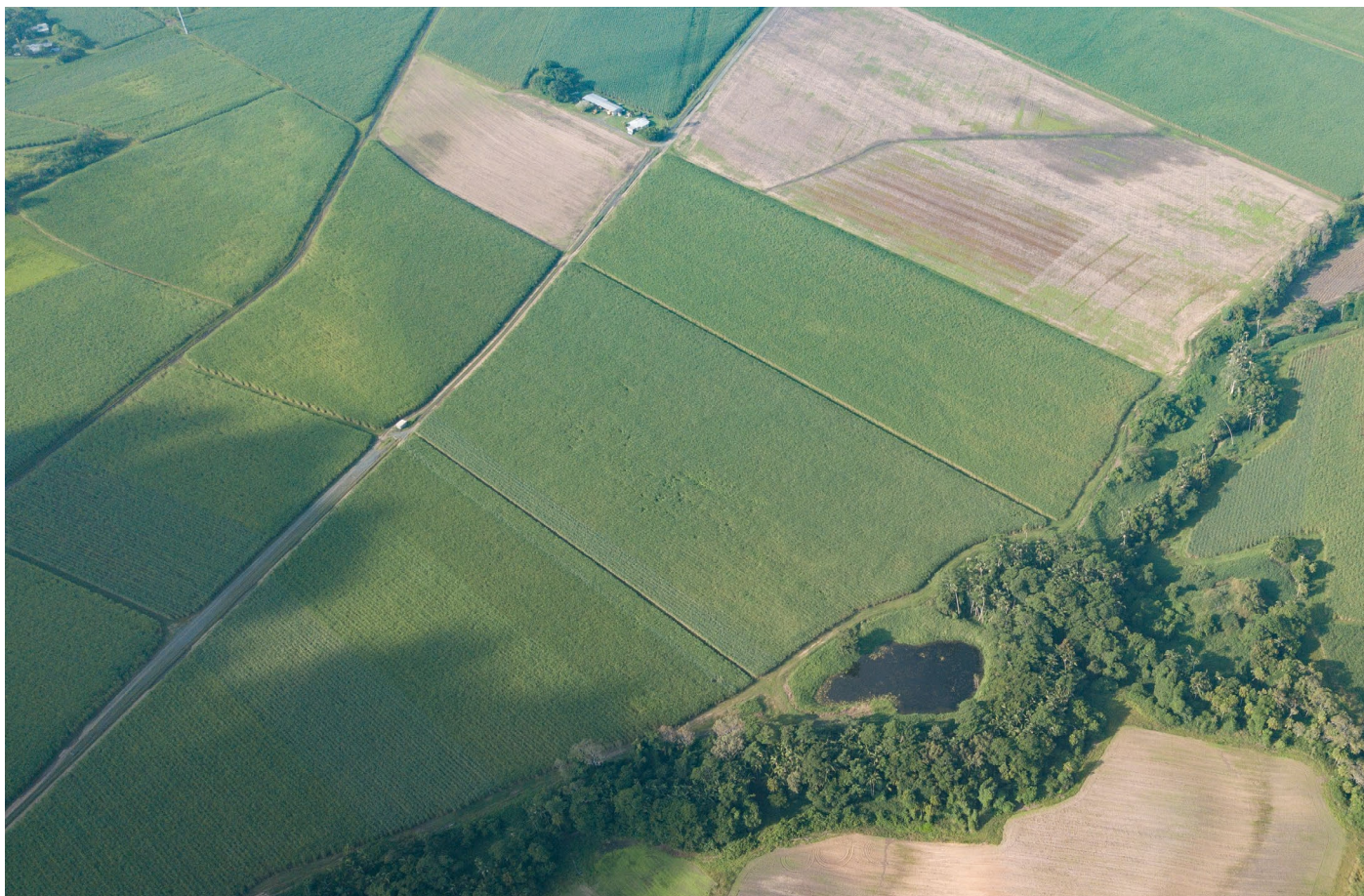
By replacing his harvesters' leg boxes with underslung boxes, Faron says he has overcome these issues.

"With the widened front and underslung boxes the cane has three feet to pass through, so we don't have those issues with mud and dirt," he said.

Continues page 16...



Pictured: (left) the underslung basecutter box provides a lot more space for the cane to pass through; (above) It took Faron and Dave two weeks to remove the underslung basecutter box (right) and reinstall the leg basecutter boxes on a recently sold harvester.



Pictured: (above) the Bowman's farm 280 hectares of cane at Erakala, near Mackay; (below) Faron's daughter Mikayla is a plant breeding technician with SRA.



"You get a full width of cane going straight up and with that you get better cleaning, better dirt dropping, you get less rock which means better chopper life, better roller wear, and more throughput through the machine.

"This machine is capable of doing 226 tonnes an hour without even trying. There aren't many standard machines that could match it.

"Even if you can pick up a 10% gain on throughput, for someone who's cutting 100,000 tonne of cane, that's saving a lot of money."

However, Faron admits there is a lot of scepticism in the industry about the use of underslung basecutter boxes.

When *Australian Canegrower* visited the farm, Faron was busy doing what he does best - modifying a harvester.

However, this was no regular modification job. Instead he was undoing some of his good work, reinstalling leg boxes on a harvester he'd just sold.

"The bloke who bought it wanted it set up like a standard harvester, so we're putting the leg boxes back in," he said.

"It's not an easy job, it'll probably take us a couple of weeks but that's the way he wanted it.

"It's not a big surprise, people just won't accept that these underslung boxes are any good.

"It's all because they've got a bad name from when they first came out 30-odd years ago. You have to remember, these were standard in a new Toft in the 90s, but the machines just didn't have the engine horsepower or hydraulic power to make them perform properly.

"People didn't like them so the manufacturers went back to leg boxes, which have been in use since the 50s or 60s, that's how old the technology in today's harvester is, it's crazy.

"And once something has a bad name no one wants to go back and revisit it. But we've gone from 200 hp in the 80s to 400+ hp today and these boxes just shine. The few of us that persevered with them made them work and they're working really, really well.

"I'm a cane farmer, not a contractor. I'm growing 20,000 tonnes of cane, do you really think I'm going to go out there and



"I'm growing 20,000 tonnes of cane, do you really think I'm going to go out there and cut my crop with something that's no good and doesn't work? It's not going to happen. I use it because it works,



cut my crop with something that's no good and doesn't work? It's not going to happen. I use it because it works," he said.

"As cane farmer I'm trying to do the best I can for my business at the lowest possible cost, because I'm trying to maximize every dollar I've got.

"And that's why we've made the changes we have. We don't want to destroy the stools because we want them there for as long as possible, in fact, that's the reason I cut my own cane, because I know what I can do.

"I can probably get another two to three years out of varieties that some other people have had to plough out because contractors have come in and wrecked them because of how they operate."

While underslung basecutter boxes might be unusual, Faron is far from the only grower using them.

"There's a few of us in the industry that use them. I know of seven machines in the Mackay region, one of them will cut 80,000 tonnes this year, another will cut 60,000 tonnes.

"I've put one in for one of my mate's machines and if someone wants to do it I'll give them a few pointers.

"There was one guy down in NSW who was having trouble getting some two year old cane through the machine, so he got and underslung and put it in a new John Deere and it's worked great for him.

"It's not a simple thing to do. There's a fair bit of work involved in swapping it all. It probably takes us a couple of weeks, by the time we change things around, change rollers, change drives, change hoses - there's lots of little bits and pieces that need to be done.

"But I'd definitely recommend it to anyone wanting a better, more efficient way to cut their cane." ■

Pictured: (above left) Eleven-year-old Calan is eager to become the seventh generation of Bowman cane growers. He's been helping out during harvest since the age of eight, driving haulouts on the family farm; Nine-year-old Clae takes a load off with Faron's cousin Dave.

StoolZippa™

MAKING ENVIRONMENTAL AND PRODUCTION GAINS FOR GROWERS

Supplied by Bayer Australia

With significant environmental scrutiny being put on the quality of water in catchments in Queensland's cane growing regions, a project designed to reduce agricultural run-off is achieving encouraging results.

The spiked closing wheel project, trademarked as StoolZippa, is being developed by John Hughes, from the Coastal Farming Unit at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), with significant industry support and input.

The primary objective of the three-year DAF-funded project is to design and engineer a prototype attachment to effectively close the compacted slot behind the double disc openers being used to apply fertilisers and pesticides on sugarcane farms.

During his frequent travels around cane regions, Mr Hughes identified that the slot left behind double disc openers on applicators, was likely to be a major contributor to both pesticides and nitrogen losses into the environment

"When the highly compacted, 110mm-deep slot made by the double disc opener fills with water, it provides chemical and fertilisers a pathway to easily run off paddocks," said Mr Hughes.

"It would be a good outcome from an environmental point of view, but also by keeping chemical and fertiliser where it should be, it will do a better job for the farmer as well."



"Closing this slot will not only improve the environmental stewardship around pesticide use, but also reduce nitrogen losses through volatilization and sunlight degradation of light-sensitive pesticides."

Mr Hughes contracted EHS Manufacturing in Mackay, which came up with an innovative engineering design, comprising two off-set spring-loaded spiked wheels positioned directly behind the double disc opener assemblies.

"The basic principle was that the hard-driving spiked wheels effectively collapse the side walls of the slot, with the wheel design allowing an easy exit from the sealed zone," he explained.

"We field tested the design extensively in different soil types and crop conditions and had to make a few modifications, to ensure we were effectively closing the slot while causing minimal damage to sugarcane."

Catchment Solutions was engaged to conduct rainfall simulation work to compare the EHS-designed spiked closing wheel against an open slot control. Rainfall simulations runs were conducted at seven, 30 and 100 days after application of imidacloprid and urea-based fertiliser blends in a ratoon crop.

The results were extremely positive, showing a significant reduction in imidacloprid and dissolved inorganic nitrogen losses.

The involvement of the Crop Science division of Bayer included conducting replicated efficacy trials to determine if effective sealing of the slot using the spiked closing wheel design could also improve cane grub control compared to an open slot control as well as reduce input losses.

Bayer Commercial Sales Representative for the central Queensland Coast, Ben Schofield, says the company was keen to be involved.

"It's so important to maintain efficacy of this chemistry in the cane industry, because there's currently no alternative to imidacloprid for general cane grub control, which is a big issue for many growers," Mr Schofield says.

"Proactive action on these sorts of issues is the best way to ensure farmers continue to get the best use of this important chemistry."

Mr Hughes said that Bayer had also contributed to the project by purchasing nine StoolZippa kits, which were fitted onto three applicators.

"We've now got organisations along the coast testing these StoolZippa assemblies, so we can make sure growers are happy with them. We also want to make sure that we can achieve the same results across the board, on different soil types in the Burdekin region and also the wet tropics."



So, where to from here? Look forward one, two or even five years and Mr Hughes says he is extremely hopeful that the spiked wheel device will be commonplace on machines along the coast.

"It would be a good outcome from an environmental point of view, but also by keeping chemical and fertiliser where it should be, it will do a better job for the farmer as well," he says.

For Bayer's part, Ben Schofield says the company recognises the importance of investing in making sure pesticides are used as effectively and responsibly as possible.

"As an R&D-focused company with a long history with imidacloprid, Bayer plays an important stewardship role in the industry," Mr Schofield says.

"Even with imidacloprid being a generic industry product, Bayer has a responsibility to see the product used sustainably so that it remains effective for the long-term."

StoolZippa™ is a Trademark of EHS Manufacturing Pty Ltd.

Pictured: (page 18) Ben Schofield (Bayer), John Hughes (DAF), Steven Lawn (EHS) and Richard Dickmann (Bayer) collaborated on the development of the StoolZippa; (above) Unlike conventional disc openers which leave an open slot through which inputs can escape, the StoolZippa closes the slot, trapping fertiliser and chemicals in the soil.

Help stop the spread of yellow crazy ants

The Wet Tropics Management Authority wants to thank all the cane farmers and contractors who attended the recent yellow crazy ant field sessions in the Cairns infestation area.

The success of the field sessions held on a cane farm highlighted the strong appetite amongst the industry to tackle this invasive species together.

The ongoing support of the cane industry is critical to ensuring we halt the spread of this invasive pest on farms and further afield into the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Of particular concern to the sugar industry is machinery that carries soil or trash. Farm implements including stool splitters, discs, rippers and hoes, as well as contractors' harvesters and planters, are considered high risk.



Photo: Wet Tropics Images

Yellow crazy ants are attracted to the sugar residue on farm machinery, quickly forming nests on machinery overnight if it's parked in and around paddocks. When moved, this machinery can spread ants.

There are several ways to address this biosecurity risk:

1. Adopt industry best management practices, such as washing down machinery and removing trash.
2. Manage people movement. Use biosecurity signs and alert visitors and contractors to your biosecurity measures.
3. Monitor your farm and report anything unusual.



Finally, it is recommended that a knockdown insecticide be used on parked machinery to kill any ants that may have nested overnight.

Yellow crazy ants are restricted biosecurity matter (Category 3) under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, meaning the public, businesses, farms and governments are obliged to prevent their spread by reporting sightings and not inadvertently transporting the ants.

Please contact the Wet Tropics Management Authority's Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program to report suspect ants.

Phone: (07) 4241 0525

Email: yca@wtma.qld.gov.au

Website: www.wettropics.gov.au/what-are-yellow-crazy-ants



Women urged to take a seat at board tables

By Neroli Roocke



With the CANEGROWERS triennial elections on the horizon, the 2018 Women in Sugar conference heard a number calls for more diversity on the organisation's various boards and committees.

Hosted by the Bundaberg Women in Sugar group, marking its 18th year, the conference attracted almost 100 delegates.

Bundaberg Regional Council Deputy Mayor **Bill Trevor**, a cane grower and member of CANEGROWERS Isis, used his official opening address to encourage women in cane farming businesses to take on leadership roles in the industry.

He said that to survive the dramatic changes in costs in recent decades, the sugarcane industry has made changes and women have had a leading role.

"Having been a part of a cane farming family my whole life, the position that

women now play in the day to day operations of the farm is a far cry from the days of my youth," he said.

"A family farm is, through necessity, a partnership operation these days with women an invaluable asset to that partnership.

"Unlike men, women are prepared to read instructions or to seek and listen to new directions," Mr Trevor said drawing laughter and nods from the audience.

"For many years I've appreciated that women can see a bigger picture.

"We, as men, often become bogged down in the mechanics of farming and, at times, fail to see what is happening in our lives, our relationships with our families and neighbours or what's happening within a community.

"Women have a broader perspective and are sensitive to many of the things that men choose not to spend time on – women understand the pressures and are not afraid to network or share circumstances that are creating an emotional toll."

More often than not, he said, it is women who are the financial planners, who set budgets and ensure that bills are paid on time, have a handle on dealing with financial institutions and watch what is happening on the world trade front.

"Women have become far more engaged with the broader sugar industry and their counsel is being sought but there is still a long way to go, ladies and gentlemen," Mr Trevor said.

"If you look around at the representative boards, there are some women in certain areas but it would be a lot better if there were to be an increase in women right across the regions ... step into leadership roles within the industry!"

At present, five of the 82 elected grower representatives on CANEGROWERS boards are women.

CANEGROWERS Senior Vice-Chairman and Bundaberg CANEGROWERS Chairman **Allan Dingle** told the conference the triennial election due early in 2019 was the time to build on that number and enhance the organisation with the different things women can bring to board tables.

"The men of our world are probably more interested in being out sitting on a tractor growing cane," he said.

"But you generally have a lot of knowledge of the political side of the industry and what is happening within your own businesses and I'm sure that expertise would be valuable to the regions that you live in and across the state."





The Bundaberg CANEGROWERS Board has had **Anna Attard** as a member for the past two years. Mossman, Tableland and Rocky Point also have women as Directors.

"I urge you all to seriously think about nominating for positions," Mr Dingle told the conference. "It gives you a really good insight into the industry and women in representative roles really do do an excellent job."

MC for the day, CANEGROWERS Isis Manager **Angela Williams** said she was proud and embraced being a woman in agriculture and working on behalf of growers.

She asked the delegates to think of the learnings and skills they already had that could contribute to building resilience and strength in the industry.

"What is it that you bring to table?" she urged the delegates. "And don't forget the importance of the sisterhood, it's how we support and encourage each other - that's why the Women in Sugar movement is so crucial."

As the day progressed, the conference heard from local business owners, QSL on sugar pricing and marketing options, Sugar Research Australia on variety development and the Queensland Farmers' Federation's **Georgina Davis** on the irrigation sector's work for more affordable electricity and efficient technology.

The impact of the combination of low world sugar prices and high electricity costs on cane growing businesses was a common theme of discussions as well as questions to the speakers.

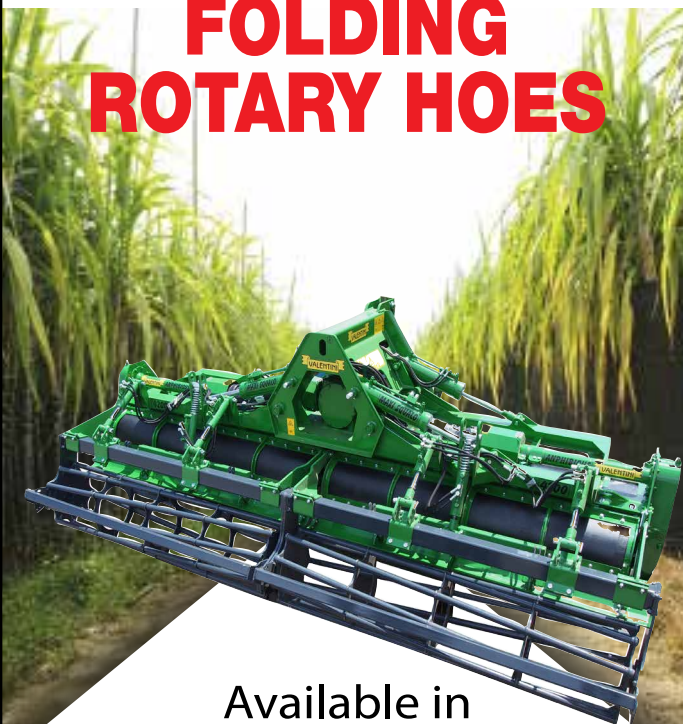
The field trip on the second day visited a number of farms which, as well as growing cane, had diversified into other products with a consumer or niche market focus including ginger, greenhouse vegetables, figs and macadamias. The day was organised and run by Bundy Food Tours which showcases the food bowl of the region.

Pictured above: Marice Perna and Ann Jansen of the Mackay Network with Nancy Chapman and Diane Bailey of Bundaberg Women in Sugar.

Adjacent page: The 2018 Women in Sugar debates visit a fig and avocado farm in the Bundaberg region and CANEGROWERS Senior Vice-Chairman Allan Dingle with Bundaberg CANEGROWERS Director Anna Attard at the conference venue.



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Matt Kealley

CANEGROWERS Environment
and Sustainability Manager

"CANEGROWERS has been working proactively with industry and government on nitrogen management over the past five years and believes the extension approach will deliver greater benefit than regulatory intervention."

PROPOSED NEW REEF REGULATIONS TABLED FOR CONSULTATION

The Queensland Government has outlined new reef regulations for sugarcane, designed to support catchment load limits for nutrients and sediments across 35 river basins in the Great Barrier Reef.

CANEGROWERS met with the Office of the Great Barrier Reef (OGBR) to discuss the proposed regulations and sugarcane minimum practice standards.

What remains the same in the proposed regulations

- Growers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin Dry Tropics and Mackay Whitsundays must meet minimum agricultural practice standards to support the achievement of catchment load limits.
- Producers accredited against a recognised BMP (Smartcane BMP) will be deemed as meeting the minimum regulated standards and will not be a focus for compliance activities.
- Within two years, growers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin Dry Tropics and Mackay Whitsundays must use a nutrient management plan.
- Sediment loss controls will be required where cane is grown on land at a gradient greater than 3%.

Main changes to the proposed regulations in response to our submissions

- Minimum standards will not be regulated in the Burnett Mary region at this stage. However, sugarcane in the Burnett Mary region will be an Agricultural ERA and growers will be required to keep records of fertiliser use.
- A proposed Water Quality Offset framework is to be reconsidered at a later stage.

- New, expanded or intensified agricultural activities must meet minimum standards but are not required to meet additional farm design standards.

CANEGROWERS initial view

CANEGROWERS strongly opposes the requirement that nutrient management plans must be in place within two years.

CANEGROWERS has been working proactively with industry and government on nitrogen management over the past five years and believes the extension approach to deliver nutrient management plans supported by Smartcane BMP and Six Easy Steps will deliver greater benefit than the further regulatory intervention proposed.

CANEGROWERS is also advocating for the removal of any requirement for additional sediment loss controls as this is not supported by water quality monitoring data or science from the Scientific Consensus Statement.

Next steps

The OGBR will continue industry consultation and a Bill is expected to be drafted by June and introduced to Parliament in August / September 2018.

CANEGROWERS will work with the industry on the proposed regulations as negotiations continue with the OGBR. ■

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1 MSW plant cane cutter, 1 MSW heavy duty ratooning disc always shedded. Ph 0417 180 378

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Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)		Year to date	Average rainfall (mm) January-May
	7 days to 9am 07.05.18	14.05.18		
Mossman	15	0	1991	1668
Mareeba AP	0.4	0	650	702
Cairns	17	0.4	1867	1551
Mt Sophia	49	1	3036	2470
Babinda	0	0	1460	3055
Innisfail	77	25	2459	2525
Tully	0	34	2596	2953
Cardwell	28	2	1332	1608
Lucinda	25	0	1364	1583
Ingham	17	18	1543	1509
Abergowrie	13	6	1602	1379
Townsville	0	0	736	847
Ayr DPI	0.2	0	567	686
Proserpine	1	0.2	798	985
Mirani	6	0.8	591	1060
Mackay	16	0.4	602	1104
Sarina (Plane Ck)	6	0	771	1225
Bundaberg	2	9	426	560
Childers South	2	10	561	472
Maryborough	10	3	582	660
Tewantin	10	51	684	1019
Eumundi	7	75	831	995
Nambour	8	79	654	996
Woongoolba	0	38	597	745
Murwillumbah	0.4	14	452	938
Ballina	30	36	770	948
Woodburn	6	32	545	765



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

Bundaberg-Rocky Point

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Wanted

Wanted to buy, PTO driven tractor mister, ph 07 4950 1162 Sarina area.

Wanted: Bonel 3 row stool finger wheel rake to rake trash off stool. Ph. 0428 591 048

WTB: Trash Fertiliser Box, Irvin Boom Spray or similar with or without spray tank. Ph. 0419 788 376

Tractor tyres – BUY & SELL. All sizes. Ph. 0418 775 698

Wanted: 35-1 planetary final drive to suit Toft 6000. Ph 02 6646 0207

Work Wanted

Looking for haulout contract 2018 season. Ingham area 5 years exp in the sugar industry. Phone 0420 434 977

Experienced farm worker seeking cane harvest position, any region Ph 0456 844 155

Work experience wanted in the Rocky Point, QLD area. Have mechanical experience and licence operating forklifts and irrigation pumps and HR truck driving licence. I am a quick learner and hard worker. Phone 0419 994 355

Looking for haulout driver work in the Cairns region. Can stay the full season. Have HR licence, fork lift ticket, experienced tractor driver. Haven't worked cane before but I am a quick learner. Ph Lindsay on 0417 427 408

Property

Looking for small acreage near Mackay for fruits & vegetables farming also wanted to buy second hand farming implements Ph 0414 900 121

600 acres Cane & Cattle – Sarina, 9 Titles, 2 Large Houses, 2 Sheds, Near new Tractors & Implements, 20 mins City Gates, 5 mins Sarina. Ph. 0418 186 525

Wanted: Cane land to lease Mackay Sugar area. Ph. 0407 638 370

Wanted to Buy: Farmhouse on separate title (without farm) up to 25kms from Mackay City Gates. Please leave a message on 4954 4869. Thank you.

Cane Farm Cone Creek Road MT CHRISTIAN. Total area 93.43ha CPA 70.81ha. House, sheds, machinery, irrigator with 2 dams. Genuine offers/enquiries only. Ph. 0428 852 279

For Sale - Cane farm Proserpine 199 hectares total 155 hectares under cane. 2018 crop 10500 ton approx. 495megs of water. 2x hardhoses and half of the farm is flood irrigated. Farm comes with machinery. 3 houses on the farm main house is fully airconed and has a large swimming pool. 0400 794 857

VICTORIA PLAINS CANE FARM 84ha – average 6000 tonne – Kinchant dam allocation and bore water. Irrigation equip, 2 sheds, machinery. Renovated 4-bedroom home. Genuine enquiries Ph 0409 342 123

100ha VICTORIA PLAINS canefarm for sale, 318ml Kinchant dam allocation, this years crop, tractors, irrigation and implements included. 15x9m shed. For more information Ph. 0419 541 372

Cane farm Tarakan Road ABERGOWRIE 270 acres freehold Genuine enquiries Pls phone 4777 4633 or 0408 608 664

CANE FARM FOR SALE \$750,000. 507 Eton-Homebush Rd, OAKENDEN (Mackay Region, Central Qld). 6brm home and sheds. 65.58ha (162 acres), 2 freehold titles, WIWO. Irrigated, close cart, flat, no rocks, good soil, 25 mins to town. Ph Pauline 0428 575 787 or Kent 0427 877 874

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. More Pics www.horsedeals.com.au/listings/tropical-horse-paradise-b46ffd33-0236-427b-9f3e-ddaad136bb28. Easy farm to maintain. Call 0408 880 724 Mandy





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- YaraMila 17-5-10(4) – compound granule
- YaraVita BORTRAC & MOLYTRAC – liquid micronutrients



For more information visit www.yara.com.au or contact your local sales agronomist.