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Australia an  
inspiration  
to sugar-  
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trial satellite  
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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR AUSTRALIA'S SUGARCANE INDUSTRY



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29 January 2018



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*COVER IMAGE: After two long years of drought conditions, Maryborough grower Brad Cronau is hoping a new 55 megalitre dam and low-pressure pivot irrigator will protect his Yerra farm from future dry spells. Read more on page 14.*

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# Sugar tax — the saga continues

By Paul Schembri, Chairman CANEGROWERS

No sooner had the New Year celebrations subsided, than the spectre of a sugar tax had once again raised its ugly head.

This latest round of calls for a sugar tax began with a short documentary released by the New York Times about obesity in Australia.

The US media outlet came to Mackay to collect interviews about the industry and its regional linkages, its dependence on international trade, and its lobbying efforts with government.

However, we were surprised to see a documentary piece on sugar consumption and obesity unfairly highlighting Mackay's population and its sugar industry, and canvassing health interventions including a sugar tax, surgery and food advertising.

Fast on the heels of this video, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) released a statement calling for a tax on sweetened beverages.

The central theme in this whole debate has been an attempt to demonise sugar. The anti-sugar campaigners have clearly sought to portray sugar as the dietary bogeyman.

Not surprisingly, we as a sugar industry strongly oppose the introduction of a soft drink or sugar tax.

It is our view that sugar, if consumed in moderation, can be a part of a healthy, balanced and sensible diet. Too much of anything can't be good for you.

The calls for a tax on sugar are irrational to reasonable people. We do accept that this debate is part of a larger debate about contemporary health issues, namely obesity, heart disease and diabetes. These are serious health issues that are complex in terms of cause and prevention.

What is irrational is this simplistic view that the introduction of a sugar tax will somehow cure diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Sugar consumption in Australia has declined significantly over the last three decades, at the same time obesity levels have soared. Since around 1980 sugar sales in Australia have been static, at around one million

tonnes, while the population has increased by almost ten million.

We also refute the assertion that a tax on sweetened beverages will do no damage to sugar producers and the industry. It is just a "harmless" tax they say.

A sugar tax will damage our industry. Any tax will always cascade back to the producer in terms of a reduced price for our product.

Any sugar tax would be seen as a state sanctioned tax against the industry which will harm our investment climate both internally and externally.

CANEGROWERS is not dismissive of this issue. We acknowledge that a negative perception exists about sugar and the part that it plays in our diet. CANEGROWERS is working with the ASMC (Australian Sugar Milling Council) to develop a strategic approach to mitigate the concerns that the community has about the consumption of sugar.

We are pleased that to date the Federal Government has made it crystal clear that there will be no sugar tax. Equally we understand that the ALP too has ruled out a sugar tax.

We are confident that in the fullness of time our product will be freed of the unfavourable perception that it's the sole cause of obesity. ■



*"Not surprisingly we as a sugar industry strongly oppose the introduction of a soft drink or sugar tax. It is our view that sugar if consumed in moderation can be a part of a healthy, balanced and sensible diet."*



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# NEWS IN BRIEF

## Cane community shocked and saddened by deaths

Mourners have lined a Sarina street to pay their respects to well-loved local brothers Frank and George Vella.

Sarina town centre came to a standstill on 22 January, as businesses closed their doors and hundreds of grieving locals lined the main street to say a final farewell to George Vella (48) and Frank Vella (52).

The brothers, who had died in tragic workplace accident nine days earlier, were well-known and much-loved members of the cane-growing community.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is carrying out an

investigation in the circumstances surrounding the deaths at Vella Haulage Sarina, on 13 January.

The pair are believed to have died while cleaning out a tanker that had been used to transport molasses the day before.

CANEGROWERS Chairman **Paul Schembri** said it was, "an enormous tragedy for the whole region".

"The Vella family is considered to be one of the most highly regarded and well respected families. It's a great tragedy," Mr Schembri said.

"They have had extensive interests in sugarcane and transport haulage industries and it comes as a great loss to all of us.

"We live in close-knit communities and we as a community are feeling that pain." ■

"We live in close-knit communities and we as a community are feeling that pain."

## REPORT FINDS NO BASIS FOR SUGAR TAX

A new report from the Menzies Research Centre has concluded there is no evidence that a tax on the sugar content of soft drinks would provide significant health benefits.

The report called *Fat Chance: Why sugar taxes won't work* analyses five papers from Australia and one from Mexico.

It concludes that where a tax had been implemented there was little or no effect on consumption or public health.

The report can be found here <http://menziesrc.org/>



## NEW CEO AT ASMC

The Australian Sugar Milling Council has welcomed **David Pietsch** as its new Chief Executive.

Mr Pietsch replaces **Dominic Nolan**.

He has moved to ASMC from Meat and Livestock Australia where he's worked in a variety of roles since 2004, the most recent as the International Business Manager North America based in Washington DC.

## BOOST TO REEF FUNDS

An allocation of \$36.6 million to the Reef Trust program for water quality improvements was part of a \$60 m Great Barrier Reef funding announcement made by the Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull**.

The Federal Government said the allocation would build on success with farmers reducing soil erosion, improving on-farm nutrient management and restoring coastal and riparian vegetation.

Funding was also included in the announcement for more crown-of-thorns starfish control boats, more field offices to patrol and monitor the reef and research into coral adaption and recovery. ■

## New Environment Minister visits cane farm



Queensland's Environment Minister **Lianne Enoch** has visited the farm of CANEGROWERS Innisfail Chairman **Joe Marano** to sign a Cane Changer commitment.

Ms Enoch pledged to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of Queensland growers in improving their farming practices,

especially as they relate to the health of the Great Barrier Reef, recognise the important role that cane growers play for the State of Queensland and work collaboratively with the industry for a better future.

See the 12 February issue of *Australian Canegrower* magazine for more. ■



# CANEGROWERS talks trade in Europe and UK

Queensland's sugarcane farmers are being represented in a National Farmers' Federation 'Team Australian Agriculture' delegation to Europe and the United Kingdom.

CANEGROWERS Head of Economic **Warren Males** is looking to understand the rapidly changing markets in the EU and UK and to support the full inclusion of sugar in a future Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the European Union.

"The planned withdrawal of Britain from the European Union offers the Australian sugar industry a fantastic opportunity," CANEGROWERS CEO **Dan Galligan** said. "We want to reopen an historic sugar export market which was lost when the UK joined the European Common Market and we also want to increase opportunities for EU refiners to source Australian sugar."

The visit commenced with a visit to Deutscher Bauernverband, the representative body of German farmers, where the delegation met its President **Joachim Rukwied**.

"EU agricultural policy is facing significant change and the sugar sector is no exception," Warren Males said. "Without quotas production has increased sharply (up 5Mt), internal competition is much stronger and prices much lower and close to export parity. Significant restructuring is also occurring."

While EU sugar beet yields are increasing by 2-3% each year, CANEGROWERS does not believe offering Australian sugar to refiners in the region will jeopardise the future of local farmers.

"There is a strong demand for raw cane sugar in Europe and in the UK alone there is an 800,000-tonne shortfall between domestic sugar production and consumption. We want British refiners to be able to source Australian raw sugar to help fill that gap," Mr Galligan said.

## TPP

As the NFF delegation began its round of meetings in Germany, they welcomed the news that the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, involving eleven nations following the departure of the United States, is due to be signed on 8 March.

Despite the US absence, once it is implemented, the agreement will deliver significant benefits to the Australian sugar industry.

Warren Males said of particular significance would be improved terms of trade with Japan.

"Projections for sales of high pol sugar to Japanese refineries are around 600,000 tonnes for this financial year, a substantial increase on previous years," he said. "When implemented the TPP will improve the terms of access to Japan for Australian of around \$25 per tonne."

"The gains go beyond those achieved in the Japan-Australia bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement."

"The deal translates to dollars for the Australian industry and it is very much a step in the right direction as far as trade liberalisation goes." ■



*Pictured: CANEGROWERS Head of Economics Warren Males in a Wallabies beanie with the NFF delegation meeting with a German farmers group.*

## Reef Trust Repeated Tenders



### Funding Opportunity for Wet Tropics Cane Growers

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[www.wtsip.org.au](http://www.wtsip.org.au)



#### INFORMATION SESSIONS:

- **5 February** (10am-11.30am)  
Tully Mill Hall, Writ Lane, Tully
- **6 February** (9am-10.30am)  
HCPSL, 181 Fairford Rd, Ingham
- **7 February** (9.30am-11am)  
Innisfail Australian Sugar Heritage Centre (Sugar Museum), Mourilyan
- **7 February** (2pm-3.30pm)  
Gordonvale Canegrowers  
29 Norman St, Gordonvale
- **8 February** (9am-10.30am)  
Mossman Ag Services  
107 Alchera Drive, Mossman

# Policy Update

Industry with Burn Ashburner

Economics with Warren Males

## Reducing risks to people and business

With harvest over and planting operations complete, growers finally have a bit of breathing space from field-based operations. This doesn't mean they're not busy, it just means they can be more flexible with their time.

Around this time last year, I recommended that growers went through the Smartcane BMP business module to identify where their businesses may need some attention. I still think this is a good idea.

This year I would like to encourage growers to take a close look at ways they can reduce risks, not only to themselves and others working or living on the farm, but also to the business.

This means having good workplace health and safety processes and procedures in place, and complying with oversize agricultural equipment road access regulations.

Not very sexy, I know, but these issues can have potentially serious consequences for you and the business.

Firstly, there have been a number of cane farm-related deaths and incidences in recent years.

If taking just a little more time to reassess your risks and address them can make a difference, then it is worth it.

Look out for WHS workshops based on the Smartcane BMP module. These will provide a clear indication of what you may be able to implement, not just to comply (although that is important), but to genuinely be safer.

Secondly, although CANEGROWERS will continue to push for improved safe road access conditions, growers need to comply with the current regulations for the movement of oversize agricultural equipment.

Is the additional effort and cost to comply really that great when compared to the potential severe consequences if you have an incident without complying (no insurance)?

CANEGROWERS will be organising workshops conducted by Transport and Main Roads and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and supported by Queensland Police.

These are planned to cover the regulations for access (vehicles over 2.5m wide on public roads), the new portal for permit applications, and what the chain of responsibility means for growers.

Look out for these and reduce your risk. ■



## It's 2018 and time to fix electricity prices

The Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) has commenced its review of electricity retail prices for regional Queensland for 2018-19.

Highlighting the many inequities in the prices customers in Ergon's distribution area pay for electricity, CANEGROWERS is again calling for a reduction in Ergon's retail electricity prices.

Ergon is receiving a windfall revenue gain at the expense of its customers. Last year, after QCA issued its final retail price determination for 2017-18, the Queensland Government directed Stanwell Corporation to undertake strategies to place downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices and wholesale prices fell. Retail electricity prices in regional Queensland were left unchanged.

*"As the ACCC notes, electricity price increases over the past decade have diminished the international competitiveness of Australian business."*

With retailers in South-East Queensland responding to the Queensland government endorsed 50/50 joint venture between the government owned CS Energy and Alinta Energy to supply electricity to residential and small commercial and industrial customers within the Energex distribution area, the deal is delivering retail prices up to 25% below the standing offer. The benefits of the deal are not available to customers in regional Queensland.

Ergon is also receiving a windfall gain at the expense of its consumers from last year's QCA decision to increase the allowance for renewable energy certificates by a punitive 49.9%. In the context of the Queensland Government's policy push towards renewables, it is unlikely that an efficient prudent retailer, such as Ergon Retail, with evergreen customer contracts would not be actively managing its exposure to renewable energy. Yet this is what QCA's methodology appears to assume.

QCA's methodology, which is bottom-up supported by benchmarking, for calculating the retail cost allowance in regional Queensland is delivering excessive retail cost allowances in real terms and this is adding to the gains Ergon is making at the expense of its consumers.

As the ACCC notes, electricity price increases over the past decade have diminished the international competitiveness of Australian business.

It's 2018 and time to fix the electricity price problem! ■

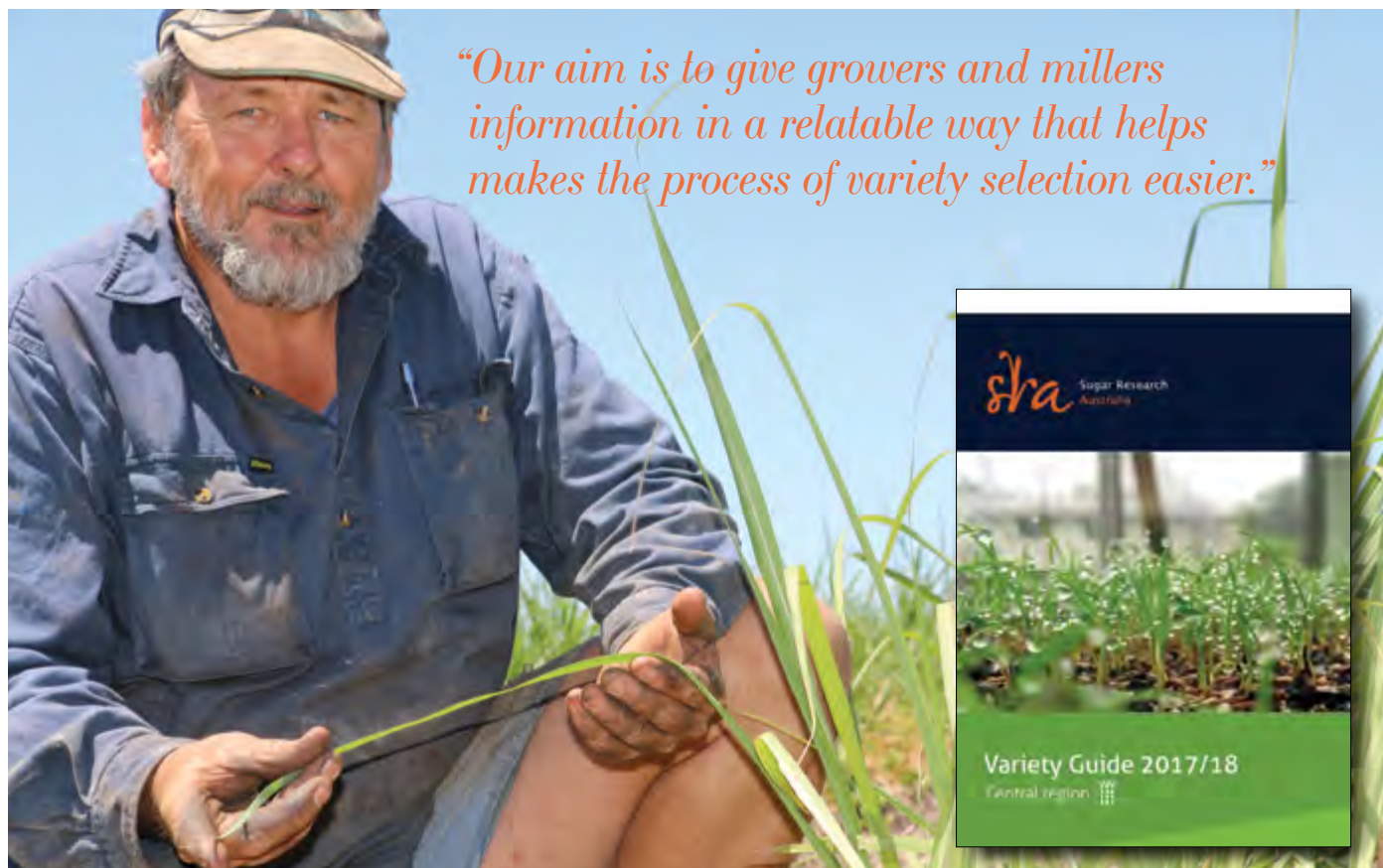




# VARIETY GUIDES HELP

make selection easier for growers and millers

SRA has produced a new hard copy publication for sugarcane growers and millers to put detailed information on sugarcane varieties at their fingertips.



The 2017/18 variety guides have been posted to growers and millers and provide information for growers to help them select the best sugarcane varieties to plant.

The six guides cover the regions of NSW, Southern, Central, Burdekin, Herbert, and Northern.

SRA Adoption Officer for Varieties, Tracy Hay, said the purpose of the guides was to provide information from variety assessment trials, including valuable data on tonnes, sugar content, disease ratings, and a range of other attributes.

"Plant breeding is the single largest investment area that SRA makes on behalf of the industry, to produce new sugarcane varieties that enhance the productivity, profitability and sustainability of growers and millers," Ms Hay said.

"A key question for growers and millers is – how might this variety perform in

my region and in my conditions? The SRA variety guides answer that question with the best available trial data and agronomic information.

"Our aim is to give growers and millers information in a relatable way that helps makes the process of variety selection easier."

Proserpine grower Lindsay Altmann said that choosing a variety was a crucial foundation of profitable and sustainable sugarcane farming, and that growers were always looking for more information on variety performance.

"The information provided in the Variety Guide is useful in helping to make decisions for planting," Mr Altmann said.

"Growers need to weigh up a range of factors such as yield and disease tolerance. The guide helps with that information."

The guides can be viewed at <https://sugarresearch.com.au/sra-information/publications/>

SRA members have been sent their variety guide with the latest issue of CaneConnection.

If you have not received a copy or if you have questions, contact Tracy Hay on [thay@sugarresearch.com.au](mailto:thay@sugarresearch.com.au) or (07) 4056 4527. ■

*PICTURED: Proserpine grower Lindsay Altmann said the information in the variety guides was useful in informing decisions at his farm. INSET: Six regional versions of the guides have been produced.*

# SUGAR-PRODUCING NATIONS LOOK TO AUSTRALIA FOR INSPIRATION

Australia's sugar industry needs to remain focused on continuing production and sustainability gains as smaller sugar-producing nations look to replicate the industry's success, says CANEGROWERS Environment and Sustainability Manager **Matt Kealley**.

Speaking from the Bonsucro Week conference in Nicaragua, where he gave a presentation on the Queensland industry's best management practices program, Smartcane BMP, Mr Kealley said end-users are focused on sourcing sustainably produced sugar by 2020.

He said Australia needs to maintain its world-leading position to remain competitive.

The five-day conference saw more than 150 delegates participate in workshops and tours of the San Antonio and Monte Rosa mills.

Attendees included representatives from Central and South American sugar-producing countries, as well as South Africa, the US, Australia, Thailand and the UK. Millers, growers, NGO's, traders, certification bodies and sugar end-users such as Coca-cola, Pepsi, Mars and Shell were all represented.

"I presented on Smartcane BMP, mechanised farming practices and sustainability, as well as the work CANEGROWERS is doing with Bonsucro on alignment and cross-certification," Mr Kealley said.

"There was great interest in the practices and equipment used in Australia to improve our production and efficiency."

Mr Kealley also met with Bonsucro representatives to progress discussions on Smartcane BMP cross-accreditation and the practical steps to achieving this goal within the next six months.

"While the industry is focused on improving productivity and efficiencies, end users are focusing on switching to sustainably sourced sugar by 2020, either through certification or credits," he said.



*Pictured: (above) Matt Kealley, Mike Ogg a consultant agronomist from Swaziland and Anthony Edmonds a grower from South Africa.*







Pictured (below L to R) 1: Panel discussion on labour needs and issues. 2: Volcano from Monte Rosa mill area. Burnt hand cut cane in wind rows in foreground. 3: Health staff with hydration drinks for workers—this is like Gatorade. 4: Mechanical harvesting with control traffic and GPS.

***"The desire to improve productivity, efficiency and sustainability is strong, meaning the Australian industry shouldn't lose focus."***

"Australia is held in high regard for its practices, mechanisation and innovation, which means other cane growing regions are following our lead and striving to improve.

"The technology and practices that I saw in Nicaragua were similar to those used in Queensland. The mills are also extracting all the available value from the cane.

"The desire to improve productivity, efficiency and sustainability is strong, meaning the Australian industry shouldn't lose focus." ■

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Alternatively you can visit [my.gov.au](http://my.gov.au) to locate and combine your super. You will need to setup a myGov account to do this.

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

#### Disclaimers:

1 ATO lost super data as at 30 June 2017.

2 Interest on unclaimed super accounts held with the ATO is calculated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and is paid when your claim is processed.

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# Aiming high with

Supplied by WTSIP

Satellite imagery will be trialled by cane farmers to help improve crop yields in a first for the Wet Tropics cane industry.

Three Tully growers will trial new satellite technology to address crop yield variations within blocks – and they hope it will be a win-win for their businesses and the environment.

The imagery will be used to identify areas with higher or lower yields in an attempt to tailor fertiliser rates within a cane block to improve profits and reduce runoff.

One of the growers, **Brian Dore**, said that improvements in quantity and reliability of data as well as pixel size, scale and image quality, had made satellite and advanced soil-mapping technology worth exploring, potentially leading to more calculated decisions based on facts.

"We are already managing our farm down to single blocks but we want to see if we can go further and address variabilities within blocks too. We will be using GNDVI satellite imagery in conjunction with advanced soil analysis technologies so that we can align soil variations with yield zone variations," he said.


"Drainage is also an issue. Too little drainage and the cane won't grow; too much and the cane won't grow. We want to be able to address these issues more precisely and achieve a more uniform yield across blocks and this technology might help to do this."

If drainage issues are identified with the technology they will be addressed first, followed by ameliorant application such as lime, and then fertiliser.

"This technology has been used successfully in other industries so we want to see if it will work with sugar cane in the Wet Tropics.

"With this information becoming available, this is a great opportunity to find out if we can use it to be more efficient with nutrients and inputs.

The project is being funded through an Innovation Grants program delivered by the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership (WTSIP) on behalf of the Australian Government's



*"Drainage is also an issue. Too little drainage and the cane won't grow; too much and the cane won't grow. We want to be able to address these issues more precisely and achieve a more uniform yield across blocks and this technology might help to do this."*



# satellite cane trial

Reef Trust III initiative to improve water quality to the Great Barrier Reef.

**Joe Marano**, Chair of WTSIP, said there was a trend in the cane industry towards more tailored use of fertilisers and inputs.

"Matching inputs more closely to crop requirements has several benefits for growers back pockets as well as the environment," he said.

"The cane industry is constantly evolving and looking for ways to refine the use of chemical inputs. While it's a lot of work changing farming systems and what works on one farm may not work on another, the technology and data now available present a lot of opportunities to enhance traditional farming methods."

The growers involved in this trial are being provided with technical support by **Andrew Robson** at University of New England, BMS Laser Sat, Farmacist and T.R.A.P Services. ■



PICTURED: Tully grower **Brian Dore**. (R) GPS mapping in cab.



## Nominations now open for new early pool



*By QSL Finance Manager - Supplier Relations Bryce Wenham*

QSL's new later Pricing Declaration Date means that growers have until April 2018 to finalise their QSL 2018-Season pool nominations. As a result, nominations for the 2018-Season QSL Harvest, Actively Managed and Guaranteed Floor Pools and the 2019-Season 2-Season Actively Managed Pool cannot be made until 1 March 2018. However, for growers keen to start pricing before then, QSL has a number of options available.

### **QSL EARLY-START ACTIVELY MANAGED POOL**

Just like the standard QSL Actively Managed Pool, the QSL Early-Start Actively Managed Pool is an in-season Committed Pool managed by QSL, and has a minimum tonnage nomination of 10 tonnes.

But as its name suggests, it starts pricing two months before the standard QSL Actively Managed Pool, giving it a longer pricing window.

This pool provides an opportunity for growers who are prepared to commit some tonnage early to join a pool that commences pricing early, or they can wait and join the other in-season pools at a later date.

**Nominations for the QSL Early-Start Actively Managed Pool are now open and will close on 28 February 2018.**

For further information, please read the applicable Pricing Pool Terms for this pool (available at [www.qsl.com.au](http://www.qsl.com.au)), or contact your local QSL Grower Services Team representative.

### **GROWER-MANAGED PRICING**

Growers keen to manage their own pricing can also nominate tonnes and start pricing using the QSL Target Price Pool or QSL Individual Futures Contract Pool.

**QSL's Target Price Pool** enables growers to price their GEI Sugar up to three seasons ahead by targeting a whole-of season average price. Orders must be in minimums of 10 tonnes, with targets in \$5 increments. Pricing is to be completed by 20 April (or 15 February for MSF Sugar Growers) in the year after crushing commences for the relevant season.

**QSL's Individual Futures Contract Pool** also enables growers to price GEI Sugar up to three seasons in advance by pricing incrementally against the four individual ICE 11 contracts available each season. Nominations to this pool must be done in a minimum or multiple allocation of 60 tonnes, with individual pricing orders in a minimum of 10 tonnes and \$5 increments. All pricing must be complete by 20 April in the year after crushing commences for the relevant season.

### **THE NEW APRIL DEADLINE**

Nominations for the 2018 QSL Harvest Pool, Actively Managed Pool and Guaranteed Floor Pool, as well as the 2019 2-Season Actively Managed Pool, open on 1 March 2018 and close on 30 April 2018 (Please note: Isis Central Sugar Mill, Bundaberg Sugar and Mackay Sugar growers will be advised by their miller of their 2018-Season QSL Pricing Declaration deadline).

As in past seasons, growers who make no active nominations by the Pricing Declaration deadline will have their QSL GEI tonnage default to the QSL Harvest Pool.

Growers who have elected to use the QSL Target Price Pool for the 2018 Season but who have not achieved their targets, now also have until their Pricing Declaration deadline to take up the option to transfer their unfilled orders to other QSL pools. Growers in QSL's Individual Futures Contract Pool can also transfer unfilled 2018-Season orders from this product to other QSL pools by their Pricing Declaration deadline, as long they have not priced any portion of their nominated tonnage. ■





## QSL Advances increase

The Standard QSL Advances rate increased to 80% as of 24 January 2018 and was calculated on QSL pool values as of 29 December 2017.

The next Advances increase will apply from 21 February 2018, when the Standard QSL Advances rate will rise to 82.5%. This February payment will be based on QSL pool values as of 26 January 2018.

The QSL Accelerated Advances rate remains 90% and is not currently scheduled to increase until May 2018.

## Cashflow Forecaster – QSL Direct

Wilmar growers using QSL for marketing and pricing services can now access an estimate of their QSL sugar payments by using the Cashflow Forecast tool within their QSL Direct account.

This feature is located under the 'Reporting' tab for the current season – just click on the Cashflow Forecast button located under the graphs in this section. It looks like this:

Download

Cashflow Forecast

Clicking on this button within your QSL Direct account will generate an Excel spreadsheet which details the current indicative value of your QSL pool allocations, as well as a month-by-month breakdown of sugar deliveries and the associated QSL sugar payment by farm.

In addition to detailing QSL sugar payments made to date, the spreadsheet also provides an estimate of QSL sugar payments for coming months.

It is important to note that the cashflow data provided only details the GEI sugar payment portion of your QSL Advance payment and **does not include any allowances, deductions or adjustments that may be passed on by your miller**, nor does it currently reflect any negative balances you may have on your farm ledger.

It provides an estimate only that also does not account for any changes to your current indicative pricing results, which can fluctuate throughout the course of the season and are not finalised until 30 June 2018. As such, we recommend that growers using this feature regularly generate a new forecast to ensure they are accessing the latest estimate.

The data provided is based on many assumptions and is subject to significant uncertainties, many of which are outside the control of QSL.

The Cashflow Forecast Tool is therefore an estimate only with the outputs being subject to change. As such, QSL does not make any representations as to the accuracy of the information derived from the Cashflow Forecast tool, nor does QSL make any guarantees that this outcome will be achieved.

Because of these variables, current and future months will remain as a forecast only in the Cashflow Forecast tool.

For further information regarding the Cashflow Forecast function, please read our **Cashflow Forecast – Frequently Asked Questions** (available from your local QSL office or [www.qsl.com.au](http://www.qsl.com.au)) or call the QSL Direct Helpline on **1800 870 756**. ■

## IMPORTANT DATES

WHEN	WHAT
15 February 2018	Last day to complete pricing for March 2018 orders in the 2017 In-Season Fixed Price Contract and 2017 In-Season Target Price Contract.
28 February 2018	Last day for nominations to the 2018 QSL Early-Start Actively Managed Pool
1 March 2018	Nominations open for the 2018 QSL Harvest, Actively Managed and Guaranteed Floor Pools, as well as the 2019 2-Season Actively Managed Pool.
30 April 2018	Last day to nominate tonnes to the 2018 QSL Harvest, Actively Managed and Guaranteed Floor Pools, and/or the 2019 2-Season Actively Managed Pool. **Please note: Isis Central Sugar Mill, Bundaberg Sugar and Mackay Sugar growers will be advised by their miller of their local QSL Pool Declaration deadline for 2018.
30 April 2018	Last day to transfer any unfilled orders from the QSL Target Price Pool and/or QSL Individual Futures Contract Pool to other QSL pools. (NOTE: Growers can only transfer unfilled orders from the QSL Individual Futures Contract Pool if they have not priced any portion of their nominated tonnage).

### DISCLAIMER:

*This document contains information of a summary/high level nature and therefore does not purport to be comprehensive on this topic. Growers should read the relevant Pricing Pool Terms before participating in any QSL pool. While care is taken in the preparation of this document, QSL does not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness. Information about past performance should not be relied on as an indication of future performance, nor should this Statement be taken to include representations as to future matters. This Statement does not constitute financial or investment advice. The information in this document is current only as at the date of the document.*

# DROUGHT-PROOFING FARMS THROUGH EFFICIENCIES AND INVESTMENT

By Wayne Griffin

When *Australian Canegrower* visited Maryborough in September last year, the district had already sweltered through two very hot, very dry seasons. Much of the cane still awaiting harvest looked stressed and discoloured, and frequent wind gusts picked up bone-dry trash and scattered it like confetti across the countryside. It was the picture of drought-stricken Queensland.

Unsurprisingly, it was a time of great stress for many growers in the district. The region had been drought-declared in March 2017 and by September had received just 427 mm of rain.

This was less than half of Maryborough's long-term average and most of it fell in just one event, when the tail end of Tropical Cyclone Debbie dumped almost 250mm of desperately needed water.

Most growers had no option but to use what little water they had as strategically as possible and pray to the weather gods for more rain.

However, for grower **Brad Cronau**, hoping and praying was not enough. Instead, the 37-year-old set about future-proofing his home farm against prolonged dry spells by excavating a 55 megalitre dam to supply a new French-made low-pressure pivot irrigator.

"The cyclone brought a bit of relief," Brad said when *Australian Canegrower* visited the Cronau farm.

"It filled up the top soil, but we really needed more rain to get down the profile into the sub soil. It never came. After Debbie we had barely anything, the biggest fall was maybe half an inch."

A fourth-generation cane farmer and sheet metal worker by trade, Brad worked on the family farm owned by his father Daryll and uncle Lester until five years ago, when he and wife Tara struck out on their own.







*"On a normal year we'd expect to get up to 20,000 tonnes off the three farms. This year I'm expecting about 10,000 and that's solely down to the lack of water."*

Today he farms 275 hectares of cane in the Yerra area, including 150 ha that he contract-farms for MSF.

Like almost every other grower in the district, Brad had to watch helplessly as his crops struggled over the past two years.

"On a normal year we'd expect to get up to 20,000 tonnes off the three farms. This year I'm expecting about 10,000 and that's solely down to the lack of water," Brad said.

Unsurprisingly, he has been trialling different irrigation methods in an attempt to find the most efficient system.

"At the minute we're about 90% high pressure irrigation," he said. "But I've also done about 30 acres of trickle. It's definitely a far more efficient way of watering, but it's got its problems too. The cane falls down on it and it's a problem getting it back out of the paddock."



*Pictured: Pictured: Yerra grower Brad Cronau hopes a new 55 megalitre dam and low-pressure pivot irrigation system will help future-proof his farm which has struggled through two years of drought.*

**Continues page 16 ►**



*"We're hoping that between the low pressure pivot and the high capacity dam, we'll be able to ride out any future dry spells a bit better."*

*Pictured: Paddock development is very important to Brad, who has redesigned the layout of his farm to accommodate 700m long rows. He also builds or converts a lot of his own machinery, such as this planter with double disc opener and coil press wheels (below). (Opposite page): Soybean planter.*

"I'd like a trickle tape that you could run out and in about eight or nine months it degrades away.

"That means you'd have to buy it again next year, but even so, the biggest cost is by far trying to retrieve it every year. It doesn't cost much to put it out. Because it's all on new spools you can run it out really quick. But trying to retrieve it is just a nightmare. I'd just rather forget about it."

Then in 2016, at the height of the drought, Brad began researching low-pressure pivot irrigation systems.

"We knew we couldn't just carry on the way we were. We needed a more efficient way of irrigating.

"I looked at a few of the well-known brands, but they cost about \$180,000 and I just couldn't justify the price.

"Then I was at a field day and saw this French-made pivot, made by a company called Otech. It was half the price.

"I spoke to a few guys that had them and the reports were good, so after a bit of investigation and planning we went ahead and ordered one through a local company."

It was then that the hard work really began. Not only did Brad need to carry out a lot of groundwork to get the farm ready to accommodate the new pivot, he also needed a new dam to supply the system.

"Over the last few months I've done about 250 hours in the excavator and I'm not finished yet," he said.

"I dug out a six-acre dam, which when it's at capacity will hold 55 megalitres.

"It cost about \$55,000 to build, so it worked out at around \$1000 a megalitre, which is pretty expensive to hold water, but I don't have any other option.

"This dam will be able to cover anywhere on the farm. It has a siphon that runs into the creek and has one common pump point which means it can pump either side.

"We bought our own 25t digger to do this job and we do most of our own earthworks. I've had to fill in a lot of smaller dams and gullies to make sure the pivot can walk across the farm. It's a 345 metre pivot with an end gun, it's a larger system."

Once installed (in early 2018) the pivot will cover around 20 hectares in a half circle - almost half of Brad's 50 hectare home farm.

"I looked into trickle, I looked at removable towable pivots, but a 180-degree pivot was the most efficient way of doing it. It's been a lot of work and a fair bit of expense, but thankfully you only have to do it once," Brad said.

"We're hoping that between the low-pressure pivot and the high capacity dam, we'll be able to ride out any future dry spells a bit better."

## PRACTICE CHANGE

It's not only in irrigation that Brad has been investing in practice change and efficiencies. ▶







Over the past five years he has moved the entire farm onto a 2.4m dual row, controlled traffic system.

He has also introduced zonal tillage, sub-surface fertilising and has spent a lot of time on paddock development.

"Paddock layout is really important to me and I've done a lot of work on getting the farm laid out the way I want," Brad said.

"We now have 700m long rows, which really speeds up a lot of our in-field operations."

When he's not out in the paddock, Brad can more often than not be found in the shed where he builds or converts much of his own machinery to operate as efficiently as possible within his farming system.

*Continues page 18* ►







"I've built a lot of my own gear. Everything we do is three rows, so it's 7.2m wide, from fertilising to bed forming, cultivating, rotary hoeing, etc," he said.

"Being able to build that stuff myself saves a heck of a lot of money.

"I'm a sheet metal worker by trade, my old man and my brother are both boiler makers by trade. Having that background has been key to making most of this stuff happen."

### **SMARTCANE BMP**

While he's not yet Smartcane BMP accredited, Brad adheres to most of the practices outlined in the program.

"I think probably 95% of my farming would be in line with BMP, but like a lot of growers I just don't have the paperwork to back it up. Most of the information is just in my head.

"I farm that 275 ha on my own, so when you come home in the evening after irrigating or something like that, the last thing you want to do is sit down and do records.

"But if a type of incentive came along, say where it opened a new market for us in some country that wanted to purchase that quality-assured sugar, or even if there was an additional payment from the mill for BMP grown cane, then I think a lot of growers would take it up."

That incentive might arise sooner than Brad thinks.

Major end-users of sugar, such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Mars and others, have announced that they will seek to use only sustainably produced sugar in their products, some from as soon as 2020.

CANEGROWERS is working closely with the international sustainable sugar accreditation standard, Bonsucro, to ensure Smartcane BMP-grown cane is recognised as meeting the on-farm requirements for sustainable sugar, thereby helping ensure the industry in Queensland remains competitive well into the future. ■

*Pictured: Brad built a 7.2 metre fertiliser bin to suit his 2.4m dual row farming system.*



# Debt advice for struggling farmers

New office will offer farmer professional financial advice on how to repair, reduce or rationalise farming activities to help alleviate debt burden.



The Queensland Government has established a dedicated office to help primary producers experiencing financial distress access free expert financial analysis and advice.

The Farm Debt Restructure Office will provide eligible primary producers with a no-fee, no-obligation assessment of their financial position, to help them make informed decisions on the future of their business.

The office will be overseen by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority, which has appointed an experienced panel of rural

finance specialists to deliver the farm business analysis.

Announcing the initiative, Queensland Premier **Annastacia Palaszczuk** said the Government was committed to growing the primary industries sector.

"It's a vital contributor to our economy and the backbone for rural and regional Queensland. I welcome the recent AgTrends forecast for the total value of Queensland's primary industry commodities for 2017-18 to be almost \$20 billion - \$19.87 billion," she said.

Agricultural Industry Development Minister **Mark Furner** said the assistance doesn't replace a producer's existing financial providers or advisors, but complements them by offering an alternate opinion.

"Farm Business Analysis Assistance offers eligible farmers with detailed, expert options from an approved rural finance professionals at a level that the producer may not be able to afford at their time of distress," he said.

"The report which follows an on-farm visit will give realistic options and ideas on how to repair, reduce or rationalise

farming activities within the available resources, for the best possible outcome for the farmer and their family."

The initiatives were part of the *Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017* passed by the Queensland Parliament last year and include the now mandatory Farm Business Debt Mediation introduced to prevent foreclosure on farm debt without a fair and equitable mediation process.

"The passage of the same Act, has also seen the re-commencement of the biennial Rural Debt Survey to provide an informed and up to date picture of rural debt in Queensland.

"Now with the establishment of the Farm Debt Restructure Office, I'm thrilled to see it now in place and ready to assist eligible primary producers."

For more information on eligibility and how to apply for Farm Business Analysis Assistance through the Farm Debt Restructure Office, visit [www.qrida.qld.gov.au/fdro](http://www.qrida.qld.gov.au/fdro) or Freecall 1800 623 946 and ask to speak to the Farm Debt Restructure Office. ■

**"Farm Business Analysis Assistance offers eligible farmers with detailed, expert options from an approved rural finance professionals at a level that the producer may not be able to afford at their time of distress."**



# CANE GROWERS SUCCESSION

## What is succession planning?

Succession planning is the process intended to ensure a smooth transition of ownership of the farm from the current owner to the next.

### Do I need a succession plan?

Eventually a person who owns a farm will be faced with the prospect that they can no longer, by choice or otherwise, continue to run the farming business. That circumstance can arise in a number of ways, such as:

- retirement;
- death, injury, illness or incapacity;
- financial circumstances.

Whether you need a succession plan will depend upon your own situation and circumstances. Leaving to chance such an important issue as to how your life's work and your farming enterprise might be dealt with when you move on for whatever reason, is probably not the best option.



By Chris Cooper  
CANEGROWERS legal adviser

### Farm Business Structures

Succession planning is relevant to all business structures. It really doesn't make any difference whether a farming business is held by a major company structure or by an individual. The principles of sensible planning for a time when the key decision makers change remain the same.

If the farm is owned by a company structure, whether a family company or a corporate entity, the business and management of the farm is controlled by the Board of Directors.

Those directors are still individual persons, and most well managed companies will ensure that there is an active process in place to ensure that when key directors must be replaced, suitable persons are identified and brought on to the Board.

If the farm is owned by an individual or even a small partnership, such as husband and wife or by siblings, both of which scenarios are common in the sugar industry, the issues surrounding succession planning are just as important.

The type of farming business structure does not matter. Every farming business will at some time face the necessary prospect of those in ownership /control moving on.

Planning for that circumstance can help reduce the risk of financial disasters and relationship breakdown.

### Family Farming

While succession planning is relevant to any business, it can become a little more complex when dealing with family farms. Some of the issues in family rural succession planning include:

- there may be children involved of different ages and aspirations, some may be interested in continuing the farm and others not;
- the usual desire to treat children fairly;
- the needs and requirements, financial and otherwise, of the retiring generation;
- maintaining a viable farming business for those that may take it over;
- maintaining family relationships in the face of differing objectives.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, certainly starting the process of succession planning at an early stage can help reduce the likelihood of disputes.

Talking about succession planning can be difficult within the family environment. There are also a range of matters that should be considered that may require advice and assistance with. These could be tax, financial planning and legal issues.

Often the use of an independent person who acts as a neutral facilitator can be helpful to manage the relationships within the family and to help map out the process to be undertaken. ►





# PLANNING

Succession planning in the sugarcane industry does not seem to be as developed as in some other rural industries.

While it can be complex, it can also be rewarding and if done properly can provide security, stability and comfort within the family enterprise.

For more information or assistance with developing a succession plan for your business, contact **Chris Cooper** on 07 3864 6441. ■



## FARM MANAGEMENT GRANTS

The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) is offering Farm Management Grants of up to \$2,500 to make accessing professional succession advice more affordable.



Primary producers and relatives with an interest in the enterprise can apply for a rebate of up to 50% on the costs of this advice, with each family member able to apply.

Eligible advice can include, but is not limited to, that provided by accountants, solicitors, business continuity experts, succession and financial planners.

The process of succession planning can be lengthy and can evolve over time, so producers are able to access the grants once per financial year, with the program funded until 30 June 2019. To date, more than 370 applications worth over \$631,000 have been approved to Queensland producers.

"At the end of the day, the costs of these experts' advice is a small price to pay for the sake of a smooth transition, the ongoing success of your business and most importantly, family relationships," QRIDA CEO **Cameron MacMillan** said.

"And with Farm Management Grants, it's even more affordable."

Once your plan is in place, QRIDA also has low-interest productivity loans to help implement it.

Queensland cane growers as young as 19 have used First Start Loans to buy into or take on the family business, providing up to \$2 million on 20 year loan terms, the loans are dedicated to helping the next generation build their first enterprise.

They also accommodate a staged approach to full time production, allowing young producers to start with smaller tracts of land that can be managed while still working on the family business or off-farm.

Meanwhile, Sustainability Loans have been used to prepare the family business for division or transition and set it up for future success. The loans can provide up to \$1.3 million for on-farm improvements and developments, including purchasing additional property, diversifying, investing in water infrastructure and more.

QRIDA has a team of Regional Area Managers based across Queensland who can meet on-farm to discuss these programs, their requirements and application processes, and what could work for your family.

For more information visit [www.qrida.qld.gov.au](http://www.qrida.qld.gov.au) or Freecall 1800 623 946.

# Workshop to improve farm safety and efficiency

Queensland's agricultural industries are working together to help farm businesses reduce risks and increase efficiency and compliance through a series of workshops in February.



The Workplace Essentials workshops, funded by the Queensland Government and coordinated through the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN), will focus on providing farm employers and team leaders with practical information and resources to enhance workplace health and safety and people management skills.

Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) President **Stuart Armitage** encouraged farm businesses to take advantage of the subsidised training specifically tailored for farm employers and employees.

"There are approximately 1,700 workplace injuries within agriculture per year. This is unacceptable and why we want to help farm businesses get up-to-speed on their safety obligations.

"It is important that all levels of farm leadership are aware of their obligations and the practices that can be adopted to better control risks and prevent future workplace accidents.

"These workshops are a clear example of industry proactively addressing sector-wide workplace health and safety issues."

The last round of Workplace Essentials workshops, which focused on employment management practices and compliance, were a resounding success attracting more than 230 participants statewide.

"Feedback indicated that farm employers wanted the next series to focus not only on workplace health and safety but also supervisory skills. These elements are all covered in the upcoming workshops that aim to provide farm frontline staff with a much clearer understanding of workplace health and safety obligations regulations, supervisor responsibilities, performance management, and how to managing bullying and conflict constructively," said Mr Armitage.

"Attending these workshops should enhance management capacity, which leads to better bottom line results, so it should be considered an investment in the future of your business." ■

## Workshop Dates

<b>Mackay</b>	6 February	8:45am to 4pm
<b>Bowen</b>	7 February	8:45am to 4pm
<b>Charters Towers</b>	8 February	8:45am to 4pm
<b>Kingaroy</b>	20 February	8:45am to 4pm
<b>Chinchilla</b>	21 February	8:45am to 4pm
<b>Boonah</b>	22 February	8:45am to 4pm

More information and registration is available on the QFF website: [www.qff.org.au/projects/rural-jobs-skills-alliance/queensland-agricultural-workforce-network-qawn/](http://www.qff.org.au/projects/rural-jobs-skills-alliance/queensland-agricultural-workforce-network-qawn/)

## ~Invitation~

### Women in Sugar, Bundaberg and District

Have pleasure in inviting all interested persons to the

### 2018 Women in Sugar Australia Conference

being held on

**Monday 30 April and Tuesday 1 May**  
in Bundaberg



### Guest Speakers – Entertainment – Gala Dinner –

Bus tour of district

Registrations will be processed by  
Eventbrite – tickets will go on sale  
**1 March 2018**

For further information, please email  
[wisbundaberg@outlook.com](mailto:wisbundaberg@outlook.com)



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Next deadline is **5 February 2018**.

\* As a FREE service to CANEGROWERS members, *Australian Canegrower* will print suitable classified advertisements **UP TO 5 LINES FREE, FOR ONE ISSUE ONLY**. A charge of \$5.50 will apply for each extra line or part thereof. A charge will apply for advertising of non-cane growing activities. Advertisements must relate exclusively to cane farming activities, e.g. farm machinery etc. Advertisements from non-members are charged at \$11 per line incl GST. Only pre-paid ads will be accepted.

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## Rainfall Report

brought to you by AustSafe Super

Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)		Average rainfall (mm)	
	7 days to 9am		Year to date	
	15.01.18	22.01.18	Year to date	January
Mossman	0	173	173	450
Mareeba AP	10	56	85	203
Cairns	33	319	442	385
Mt Sophia	72	370	521	503
Babinda	27	313	364	633
Innisfail	39	136	243	504
Tully	0	285	285	598
Cardwell	31	104	165	435
Lucinda	4	38	114	372
Ingham	34	70	136	372
Abergowrie	6	103	144	335
Townsville	10	3	88	269
Ayr DPI	0	82	92	210
Proserpine	0	34	43	297
Mirani	0	0	20	326
Mackay	0.2	0	10	278
Sarina (Plane Ck)	6	2	68	362
Bundaberg	3	0	112	172
Childers South	4	0	193	125
Maryborough	6	0	75	163
Tewantin	1	0	8	218
Eumundi	4	0	15	228
Nambour	2	0	7	230
Woongoolba	0	0	111	164
Murwillumbah	0	0	46	198
Ballina	0	0	103	179
Woodburn	0	0	21	142

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regional Australia

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



Hodge 2 ton side dresser fert box draw bar type with coulters & 4 press wheels good condition \$6000 or ono offer Ph. 0427 588 250

Massey Ferguson Cane Harvester 102 \$5,500; Bonel Billet Planter \$5,500; Side Dresser with disc openers; \$6,500. Ph. 07 4959 6197

Sprayrite Tempo 1200 Spray Tank, Brand New, 1200L Capacity UV resistant tank, 170LPM PTO driven Pump feeding a 5-section electric controlled spray controller, Heavy Duty 3point Linkage carry frame, \$15,200 Inc. 12m or 15m boom and Hyd. Mast can be added. Ph. 0428 236 165

2003 Austoft 7700 good cond, tracks ok, triple sai chopper motors, 10.3ltr iveco, 5000 hrs on new engine also have spare 10.3ltr engine. 0428 444 885

## Bundaberg-Rocky Point

Half-tracks to suit 4000, 5000 or 6000 TOFT harvester. Fair condition. Open to offers. Ph. 0419 717 006

Wrecking TOFT 6500 harvester. Many parts available. Ph. 0413 584 728

Trash Incorporator \$5,750; S Tyne Cultivator with rakes \$6,250; International AV Tractor \$6,750 (all GST inclusive) Ph. 0419 577 110

Low pressure irrigator, Avoka winch with Bauer 50m boom \$47,000 inc GST NEG. MF1085 Tractor, motor needs attention \$3,750 inc GST. Ph. 0419 577 110

Bonel plant cane cutter with hydraulic with topper in good condition. Best offer. Ph. 0402 085 833.

Machio 6.2 metre double G heavy duty rotary hoe, Ford 5000 with 6 ft slasher, inter row 6 row cultivator (soya beans), 2 BKT 20.8 / 42 tyres 40% left. Call for details, all in good condition 0408 768 489

40 plate P&H (Bonel) offsets, new 28inch disc & bearing, manual fold to 3.5m, fully hyd adjustable cut VGC \$34000 ph 0419665001

## Wanted

STL shares wanted. Genuine grower. Pay market price. Let's keep STL shares in the hands of non-miller growers. Ph. 0419 717 006 or 0408 448 227

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

Wanted to buy HBM billet planter Ring after 6pm Ph. 0424153218

Wanted: Irwin legs and spray heads. Unibar/ Grizzly ripper clamps and legs suit 7 inch bar. 7 inch tool bar. Ph. 0457930627

## Positions Vacant

Harvester driver wanted for the 2018 season, 110,000 tonnes plus. Tully Mill Area. Please call 0418181646

## Work Wanted

Seeking farm management work. Looking to obtain a respectable position in the commercial management field and apply theoretical and practical food crop production knowledge to meet as well as exceed customer expectation. Contact: Adam Iddrisu, Kukuom-Ghana, Tel-0277941831, Email-adamiddrisu@yahoo.com

## Property

INGHAM: Cane Farm for sale. Hawkins Creek. Total Area 48.3ha. CPA 46.6ha. Shed, electricity & water. Genuine enquiries Ph. 0407 635 175

Wanted cane farm to lease Mirani area Ph. 0400 583 247

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

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

## i FIT ENGINEERING

29 Richardson St TULLY

### CHOPPER DRUMS

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

### EXTERNAL CHOPPER ADJUSTERS

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

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

### CHOPPER IDLE BEARING FOR JOHN DEERE HARVESTERS

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

### CHOPPER DRUM RECONDITIONING AND MODIFICATIONS

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

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

Ph 4068 2811 or 0408 199 309


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

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

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

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