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** Member Satisfaction Survey December 2019, 62% were very satisfied and 31% were somewhat satisfied from 2,139 respondents.

Queensland Country Health Fund Ltd ABN 18 085 048 237

FEATURES

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Senate inquiry hearings this month will hear how reef regs have unfairly targetted farmers and what needs to happen to rebuild trust in science.

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After dropping to 20-year lows in May, petrol prices made a rapid recovery in June. It's hoped this may reignite a stalled world sugar price recovery.

16 Soil health key to reducing fertiliser rates

How Herbert River cane grower Robert Bonassi slashed his fertiliser rates without affecting his yield.

24 Tech takes off in vine control trials

CANEGROWERS Innisfail is testing the use of drones to battle a vine that threatens to suffocate cane crops.

COVER IMAGE: Innisfail grower Paul Cecchi on the family farm where drones are seeking out weeds. Read more on page 24.

CONTENTS IMAGE: Herbert River grower Robert Bonassi. Read more on page 16.



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Postal Address: GPO Box 1032, Brisbane,
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Telephone: 07 3864 6444

Email: editor@CANEGROWERS.com.au

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Electricity class action

A class action aiming to compensate business owners for overpaying for electricity in Queensland has been launched.

The legal firm behind the action, Piper Alderman, says the action will relate to bills paid between 2014 and 2019 when it's alleged Stanwell Corporations and CS Energy engaged in anti-competitive behaviour which inflated both residential and business bills.

The firm is currently seeking registrations for the lawsuit, called the QLD Energy Class Action, which is being underwritten by litigation funder LCM.

See page 9 or visit the website QLDEnergyClassAction.com.au for more information. ■



UK FTA

Formal negotiations have now started towards a bilateral free trade agreement between Australia and the United Kingdom.

Trade Minister **Simon Birmingham** said Australia was ready to help the UK find new beginnings post Brexit and in doing so, open new doors for farmers, businesses, and investors.

"We've been preparing for this deal since the UK decided to leave the EU and welcome their agreement to commence negotiations," he said.

It's hoped the barriers preventing UK sugar refiners from sourcing high quality, sustainably produced Australian raw sugar will be removed under an FTA and CANEGROWERS is working closely with industry colleagues to secure this outcome. ■

New health fund partner

CANEGROWERS has a new health insurance partner – Queensland Country Health Fund.

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See page 2 for more details and how to log in to access the CANEGROWERS benefits. ■

Instant write-off extension

The Federal Government has extended an instant asset investment write-off offer until 31 December.

The measure was announced in March as part of a package to stimulate economic activity amid the impact of the coronavirus pandemic shutdown.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the extension gives businesses additional time to acquire and install assets, which can be new or second hand and could include, for example, a truck for a delivery business or a tractor for a farming business.

The threshold applies on a per asset basis, so eligible businesses can immediately write-off multiple assets provided each costs less than \$150,000. ■



Sad day as dam demolition starts

Work has started to lower the height of Paradise Dam on the Burnett River with no guarantees yet that its full capacity will be restored, a situation CANEGROWERS says is unacceptable.

CANEGROWERS Isis Chairman **Mark Mammino** said he was in a state of shock seeing demolition work on the dam that has provided water security to his family's farms near Childers since the early 1990s.

"My worst memories as a farmer are a period when my father and I ploughed out the same block of cane three times in five years because it was too dry for it to grow," he said. "It is now a travesty to see work underway to lower the Paradise Dam wall, such an important piece of infrastructure in our area and one that has given me security."

The dam wall is being lowered five metres amid concerns it could fail in a flood event.

"We all want a safe dam that protects the lives and livelihoods of the Bundaberg region," Mr Mammino said. "We need the dam fixed and remediated to its original capacity in the shortest possible time."

"We need SunWater and the political leaders to sit down with us and develop a plan for the future and to stop treating us like pawns on a chessboard – particularly as this is a state election year."

CANEGROWERS has negotiated and secured commitments and clarity around the availability of water to irrigators during the works including that:

- Maximum announced allocations will be available to irrigators from 1 July 2020 while the restoration/repairs are undertaken;
- No unsold Burnett Water on the south side will be retained by SunWater for temporary transfer to enable maximisation of announced allocation and allow irrigators to temporary transfer unwanted water between themselves;
- Releases into unregulated streams and watercourses to maximise economic productive use; and
- The transfer of water from Fred Haigh Dam to the south side will only occur in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort and that SunWater advises the north side irrigators when it will be necessary to draw on this allocation.

"While these commitments are important, our concerns for the future of agriculture in our region remain," Mr Mammino said.

"We need water security to continue the growth in agriculture that has been occurring since this irrigation scheme was first established. Agriculture is united across the region to this end." ■

Pictured: Growers are concerned about future water security, as work begins to lower Paradise Dam spillway by 5 metres.



Questions around Maryborough sugar mill future

CANEGROWERS Maryborough has called on MSF Sugar to come clean about its plans for Maryborough Mill following news the company is selling farmland.

"The huge risk is that if that land is taken out of cane production by being converted to some other crop, the mill will struggle to remain viable and growers like me will be left high and dry," Chairman **Jeff Atkinson** said.

The 5,367 hectares of farmland, which provides a third of the mill's throughput, was not offered publicly to the local growing community.

"We are very disappointed that local growers did not have an opportunity to consider purchasing some of the land,"

Mr Atkinson said. "If it is going to the highest bidder, who knows what its future will be?"

"We are also nervous because in its notification to CANEGROWERS Maryborough, MSF Sugar has only given assurances that crushing will proceed for the 2020 season.

"We need to know what happens beyond that as members have a three-year contract to supply Maryborough Mill. Will that be honored?"

Some of the land has been leased from MSF Sugar by local farmers and Mr Atkinson said it was important that the company adhered to the agreements it had with the growers.

"These growers have been working this land as an important part of the viability of their farm businesses and they deserve to be treated well," Mr Atkinson said.

"This decision by MSF Sugar will have repercussions right through our community. Around 40 jobs are directly linked to the operation of these farms, jobs in our industry growing and harvesting cane.

"Around our district this week there are many families facing uncertainty, families that have been loyal to MSF Sugar and they deserve a clear explanation of what the company is planning." ■

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Power price decision protects profits

The Queensland Competition Authority has exposed itself as an arm of government, and not an independent regulator, with its latest electricity price decision.

Its final determination on electricity prices for 2020-21 has protected the government's revenue stream from farm irrigation electricity bills by excluding transitional and obsolete irrigation tariffs from the price reductions announced for households and small businesses.

The QCA also failed to take the opportunity and act on the Australian Energy Regulator's decision to allow load control tariffs to be used as primary tariffs for irrigators.

A control load tariff carries a significantly lower electricity price than a regular tariff but trades that off with the chance that supply could be interrupted when the network is overloaded.

In regional areas that would be a rare occurrence.

CANEGROWERS' work has shown there is plenty of spare capacity in the network and members who have trialled the control load tariff have seen their electricity bills fall.

However, by keeping irrigators on higher tariffs, the QCA decision maximises the profits Ergon extracts from agriculture.

These profits flow through to the Queensland Government as dividends - for every \$100 paid in network charges on an electricity bill, \$47 go to the government.

CANEGROWERS is calling for the introduction of the new control load tariffs as primary retail tariffs immediately and a 5% reduction in the traditional agricultural tariffs in line with the reductions for other business tariffs. ■



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Reef regs – CANEGROWERS fight continues

Public hearings of the Senate committee investigation into the evidence base for reef regulations are scheduled for later this month after a four-month delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The committee has scheduled two days of hearings for Brisbane on 27 and 28 July with CANEGROWERS grower representatives from a number of districts to appear in person or by teleconference.

CANEGROWERS believes the Senators must hear from growers on their farms in their regions to fully understand the issues so is also advocating for district visits by committee members.

In its presentation to the committee, CANEGROWERS will highlight how farmers have been unfairly treated and expand on the key points in its submission that transparency, confidence and trust need to be rebuilt around the science used to justify government policy.

CANEGROWERS is pushing for an overhaul of the current system that manages the funding, quality, synthesis and communication of research used to inform policy and has made four additional recommendations to the committee calling for:

- Regular, open and robust debate about the results of research, free of political interference and with stronger grower participation in programs and projects related to our industry,
- Water quality and practice adoption targets to be developed in collaboration with industry and be catchment specific,
- An independent review of the seriously deficient Paddock to Reef program that the government uses to assess industry progress towards water quality targets, and
- An acknowledgement of the inability of regulations to drive meaningful practice change.

What has been driving change in the industry for productivity and profitability as well as environmental outcomes has been the industry's Smartcane BMP program, which has recently surpassed 560 accredited sugarcane farm businesses.

The work of the committee has gained new importance following the disappointing recent defeat in the Queensland Parliament of an Opposition motion aimed at disallowing the latest escalation of reef regulations.

"The LNP proposed common sense amendments to the reef laws passed last year but Labor guillotined debate before parliament could consider them," Shadow Environment Minister **David Crisafulli** said. "Handing over decision-making power to set farming standards to a bureaucrat in Brisbane is dangerous and provides no confidence for future regulatory certainty.

"The role of government should be to work alongside farmers and communities toward environmental outcomes instead of forcing unworkable laws onto them.

"The LNP will continue to fight tooth and nail for sensible laws that back jobs and protect the environment."

The motion was defeated and the Environment Minister **Leeanne Enoch** said it was a win for the Great Barrier Reef.

"The science is very clear that poor water quality is a major threat to the Reef, particularly for inshore coral ecosystems," she said. "Improving water quality gives the Reef the best chance of survival in a changing climate. The Palaszczuk Government's measures support the productive, profitable, and sustainable growth of farms and will grow a Reef safe agricultural industry."

CANEGROWERS has always opposed the use of regulation to achieve water quality or farming sustainability outcomes. They get in the way of all that growers have done and are doing and they risk productivity.

Many growers have chosen to express their opposition to reef regulations via a new petition to the Queensland Parliament launched by CANEGROWERS Bundaberg and the weight of numbers certainly helps the cause. You can continue to show your opposition in this way until the petition closes in early August.

Visit the website to reach the petition: <https://bit.ly/3eHnSU9> ■

STICKER SPOTTER COMPETITION



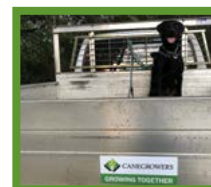
CANEGROWERS sticker spotters are now out and about in all sugarcane regions looking for vehicles proudly displaying their CANEGROWERS Growing Together bumper sticker.

This months winning registration plate numbers are 147 ZNJ, 303 WRD, AQU 495, 395 SPM. Congrats!

Can't find your CANEGROWERS bumper sticker? Need another one for another vehicle? Contact your local CANEGROWERS office.

How to enter:

- ✓ Make sure your CANEGROWERS bumper sticker is on your vehicle
- ✓ Hope that one of the CANEGROWERS sticker spotters sees it as you drive around your district
- ✓ Check the next *Australian Canegrower* magazine for a list of number plates
- ✓ If yours is there, contact CANEGROWERS Brisbane office to claim a prize. Phone 07 3864 6444 or email info@canegrowers.com.au



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CEO COMMENT

By Dan Galligan, CEO CANEGROWERS

AN INDUSTRY BUILT ON PARTNERSHIPS MUST RE-BUILD ON NEW PARTNERSHIPS

As news broke across the industry that MSF Sugar was selling off its cane farms in the Maryborough region, for many growers there was a sense of déjà vu.

It feels like an all too familiar path being laid in front of the growers affected. The southern region of our industry is undergoing significant land use change.

Competition from other, high-value horticultural and pulse crops has put inevitable demand on water and land resources. Many growers have diversified or transitioned their cane growing business.

The local CANEGROWERS Maryborough organisation has always had a very effective working relationship with MSF, and together the growers and the milling company have forged a largely successful partnership that has delivered for the local region.

They have battled together to get supportive policy and investment on many issues, particularly around transport and irrigation infrastructure.

They have also found a way to work through a range of practical and sometimes contentious issues on cane supply and mill management. None of it easy, but all of it undertaken to help improve their joint profitability.

The move by MSF to transition out of farming will have a significant impact and we feel mostly for the people directly affected by this decision.

First and foremost, the dozens of people employed in farming and harvesting operations, and the farmers who lease some of the farms.

With MSF's own land making up around one third of the cane going to their mill, the future of the Maryborough Mill is the issue on everyone's mind. While speculation in this situation is not helpful, it is a statement of fact that cane growers need a viable and reliable milling partner.

Over recent years, MSF has attempted to position itself to be

clear about a vision for where it wanted to be as a company within the Australian context. But now is the time that clarity is most desperately needed by all growers.

Our Australian sugar industry has been built on grower and miller partnerships. These are not easy, simple or necessarily smooth partnerships but success has been built on them and it cannot be argued that the certainty of a corporation trumps that of growers and their communities.

The changes we are seeing in the southern region are dramatic and rapid and everyone involved needs to pull together to do their best to provide for any transition to occur with dignity, but also as smoothly as possible. The partnerships that built the success of the regions need to secure its evolution.

The deep history of our industry is built on collective investment, often done with a high degree of uncertainty but with a view for collective progress.

There is a sense that the next iteration of industry development may be vastly different, the risk and reward profiles may have changed and we will need to be more diverse and dynamic to secure benefits for growers.

Together we can go further and more successfully than we ever will by acting purely as individuals.

CANEGROWERS will continue to act for the collective voice of growers at the district and industry level. It is also time for us to be part of setting the vision for our industry, not merely responding to it.

Our industry can go through a phase of renewal but it will not be born without organisations willing to forge long-term, resilient partnerships with all of us who have skin in the game of future successes.

And there is no stakeholder more committed to the future of their industry than those involved with CANEGROWERS. ■



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Petrol price recovery a positive sign

After reaching 20-year lows in May, petrol prices made a rapid recovery in June. But while the return of high prices caused a collective groan at bowlers across the country, it was welcome news for cane growers who are hopeful it may reignite a stalled world sugar price recovery.

2020 started off positively for the global sugar market. After years of prices floundering below the cost of production, a market rally pushed the world sugar price to two-year highs.

By mid-February, raw sugar was sitting at more than US15c/lb, a level not seen since November 2017.

But this 'sugar-rush' didn't last. As the extent of the COVID-19 threat became clear and governments around the world began closing borders and introducing social-distancing restrictions (effectively bringing international, domestic and even local traffic to a standstill) demand for fuel fell dramatically, sending oil prices plummeting into negative territory for the first time in history.

By May, Australia's petrol prices had dipped below 90c per litre for the first time in two decades, and in some areas they dropped to the low-80s.

While relief at the bowlers was widely welcomed by households and businesses struggling with skyrocketing unemployment and a looming economic recession, it was a double-edged sword for cane growers, who saw long-awaited gains in the world sugar price effectively wiped out overnight.

By early-May the sugar price had fallen by 35% from its February high. Tumbling oil prices coupled with a strengthening Australian dollar had combined to knock AU\$150 per tonne off the Aussie dollar sugar price.

HOW IS THE WORLD SUGAR PRICE TIED TO OIL PRICE?

As with all internationally traded commodities, the world sugar price is impacted by supply and demand trends. A surplus in world sugar production and stocks drives prices down, while a deficit pushes prices up.

However, sugar also has the added challenge of being impacted by the fortunes of another commodity, oil, or more precisely the impact oil prices have on ethanol prices.

Ultimately the production decisions made by the world's largest sugar producing nation, Brazil, are a major factor in determining the world sugar price, explains CANEGROWERS Head of Economics **Warren Males**.

"Brazil grows 590 million tonnes of sugarcane each year and it's what it does with that cane that can really drive the world sugar price," he said.

"Brazil is in the unique position among sugar-producing nations of being able to switch its production between raw sugar and ethanol relatively quickly.

"What this means is that when the world sugar price is low and the oil price is high, Brazil will switch some of its production away from raw sugar and into ethanol, in order to capture that higher return."

This happened in 2018 and 2019 when India's continued exports of surplus subsidised sugar onto the global market drove the world sugar price down.

Low sugar prices, firm oil prices and policy settings that encouraged ethanol production saw Brazil switch some of its 2018 and 2019 crop into ethanol, reducing its sugar output by 10 million tonnes.

This decision and a smaller Indian cane crop decreased the size of the expected global surplus in 2020 and in January the world sugar price rose accordingly.

"Then COVID-19 hit and suddenly no-one was travelling and the demand for oil and ethanol fell through the floor," Mr Males said.

"So much so that at one stage in April oil was trading at US\$40 a barrel, with

people being paid to store oil. Ethanol prices also fell sharply too.

Responding to the new prices, this year Brazil's producers are switching production back to raw sugar.

"Brazil's raw sugar output is likely to increase by 10 million tonnes, returning to the 36 million tonnes it produced in 2017. Not good news for sugar prices," Mr Males said.

It wasn't only demand for oil and ethanol that dropped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As countries went into lockdown, bars and restaurants around the world shut their doors, causing a sharp downturn in sugar consumption.

"With COVID-19, the world has changed dramatically," Mr Males said

"In March, citing a collapse in out-of-home food and drink consumption due to the closure of restaurants, sugar marketer Czarnikow cut its global sugar consumption estimate for this year by 2.0 million tonnes.

"While not as significant as the impact of tumbling oil prices, the decrease in global consumption is likely to hinder the recovery of the world sugar price."

PRICES RECOVER SLOWLY

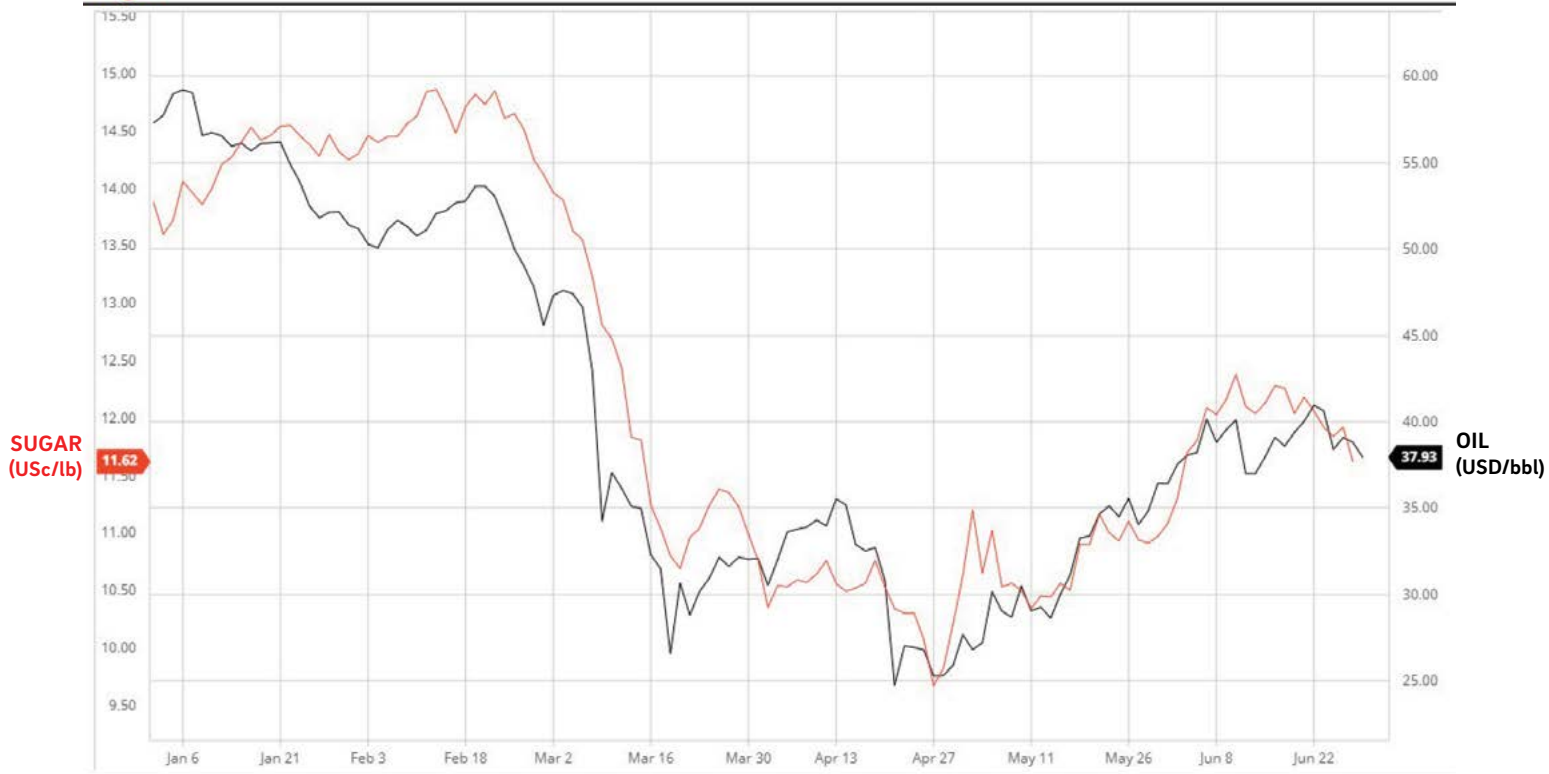
The recovery in oil prices that has occurred since May is good news for growers.

While not back to its pre-coronavirus levels, the oil price recovery is supporting a recovery in ethanol consumption and prices in Brazil.

Some are suggesting this may encourage Brazil's producers to make more ethanol and less sugar than currently expected.

Reflecting the market dynamics, sugar prices have moved higher over the past month.

Sugar and Oil Prices



What happens next will depend on Brazil's production decisions and on the size of the next Indian cane crop.

"Whether we get back to the highs of February anytime soon remains to be seen. As of 30 June the sugar price was sitting at US11.6c/lb, so there's still long way to go," Mr Males said.

"Thankfully, we know of a number of members who have been keeping up-to-date with market developments through the CANEGROWERS Marketing Information Service and locked in prices well above AU\$450 per tonne for this year's crop back in February, taking advantage of the higher prices.

"It's a timely reminder that understanding costs of production and having access to independent, expert marketing information can be the difference between being profitable and struggling to break even." ■



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FROM THE CHAIR

By Paul Schembri, Chairman CANEGROWERS

I would be less than honest if I were to say that the Queensland sugar industry is in fine shape. We are currently flying into very strong headwinds and I am frequently asked by growers about the future. Whilst no one has a crystal ball, the clue to our future might actually lie in the our past.

During our long and eventful history of almost 150 years, the sugar industry has been in similar situations before. Just recently, in the early 2000s, the sugar price fell to 2.5c/lb US and it seemed the industry might not come out the other side - but we did!

Circumstances can change very quickly. Our industry is facing complex problems, but two in particular are causing the most angst among growers – regulation of farm practices and the sugar price.

REEF REGS

Recently the Liberal National Party Opposition attempted, through a disallowance motion, to set aside the Reef Protection Act passed by parliament last year. CANEGROWERS supported this course of action and although the motion failed, it confirmed that the issue of regulating farmers just won't go away for the government.

The reason reef regulations won't go away is that farmers know we have been given a raw deal.

CANEGROWERS is not calling for no environmental scrutiny of farmers – all we want is to be assessed fairly on the good we have achieved, and not by a flawed process!

Despite the massive changes made by cane growers over 30 years to move to sustainable practices, successive Reef Report Cards allege that little progress has happened and water quality is declining. It's little wonder that farmers are losing confidence.

As the Queensland election draws closer, we will make the issue of reef regulations

a central theme of our campaign. In addition, we will be active participants in the Senate committee inquiry into the evidence used for regulations.

COVID-19 has taught us that Australian farmers, despite enormous pressure, can produce some of the highest quality food and fibre in the world.

But governments can't have it both ways. You can't have world class sustainable farmers being constantly hit with a bureaucratic blowtorch without economic consequences.

WORLD SUGAR PRICE

The world sugar price has started to rebuild on the back of rising oil and ethanol prices and by late June had reached almost US12c/lb, or AU\$380/tonne of sugar.

What has offset the price recovery for Australian producers is the steady increase in the Aus/US exchange rate.

Thankfully, through CANEGROWERS success in securing market choice for growers and the independent, expert analysis offered to members through the CANEGROWERS Marketing Information Service, many growers have been able to lock in prices for their 2020 production in excess of AU\$450/tonne.

Some have gone further and locked in good prices for 2022 and 2023, giving them peace of mind going into the seasons ahead.

WTO ACTION

Finally, an update on the World Trade Organisation action against India. As you would be aware, Australia, Brazil

and Guatemala have launched an action against India on the basis that Indian export subsidies are distorting the world price and are contrary to WTO rules.

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the case, but while the timeline has changed, the action is still alive and front of mind for the Australian Government.

Some are suggesting that WTO processes don't deliver results. But just recently, while Australia and China were in the midst of escalating trade tension, the WTO delivered in the form of reduced tariffs for Australian sugar going into China.

Whilst the tariff reduction from 85% to 50% was slight, it does show that WTO processes can deliver. Admittedly, most of the heavy lifting on that action was undertaken by Brazil, but the result was achieved with the support of the Australian sugar industry.

Despite the difficulties we're facing, it's worth remembering that circumstances can change very quickly.

The upcoming State Election will at least give us some certainty as to our fate with reef regulations.

Hopefully world sugar prices can continue to rebuild.

We do need a change of fortunes. ■

YOUR FARM, YOUR WAY

You know your farm and what you want to achieve.

Smartcane BMP recognises how you farm and supports improvements you want to make.

Talk with your district facilitator about how they can help you.



Bill and William, Proserpine



Contact your district facilitator to find out more.



Soil health the key to reducing fertiliser rates

Ask Herbert River cane grower Robert Bonassi how he's slashed fertiliser rates without affecting yield and he has two words – soil health.

SUPPLIED BY WTSIP

The third-generation farmer is focused on fallow crops, mill by-products and soil tests in his transition to cane that is less reliant on artificial fertilisers, and he says the journey has been both challenging and rewarding.

Robert is one of 39 Wet Tropics growers to take advantage of the Australian Government's Reef Trust IV tender program, delivered through the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership.

The program is helping to finance changes that enable growers to reduce fertiliser inputs without negatively impacting their productivity.

The Ingham grower cut his fertiliser rates by up to 20% over four years – moving

"We apply sub-surface mill mud and ash in the fallows. Slowly, slowly it is building our soils up and helping us with reducing our fertilisers."

from 160kg of nitrogen per hectare to 120–130kg for plant cane and 145kg for ratoons.

This reduction in artificial fertilisers, combined with the use of mill mud and ash, means Robert is now following SIX EASY STEPS recommendations for his farm.

The take-home message was simple, he said – you need to maintain healthy soils.

"I've learned you can't drop the ball, you've got to keep the soil healthy when you're reducing nitrogen and phosphorous," Robert said.

"We'd always taken soil samples but now we target every block we fallow on a yearly basis."

“Within five years we’ll have gone across the whole farm with 80 to 100 tonnes per ha of mud and ash and we should start seeing results. Then we’ll look at halving that and see if we can still meet the nitrogen levels.”

The Bonassi family grows cane on 180 ha over four parcels of land, with 25 of those hectares under fallow crops at any given time.

They moved to mounded rows and zonal tillage to solve waterlogging issues in the wet season, manufactured a zonal ripper and moulder and bought a bean planter last year.

They are also sold on mill mud and mill ash for its nutrient and soil conditioner properties.

“We apply sub-surface mill mud and ash in the fallows. Slowly, slowly it is building our soils up and helping us with reducing our fertilisers,” Robert said.

“Living 35km from the mill, we needed to think about ways to reduce costs, so we get it bulk-delivered and we bought our own spreader.

“Now we can control the rate. We spread zonally at the end of every year, using about 80 tonnes per ha. We can target where we put it depending on the state of the ground.

“Within five years we’ll have gone across the whole farm with 80 to 100 tonnes per ha of mud and ash and we should start seeing results. Then we’ll look at halving that and see if we can still meet the nitrogen levels.”

He said the regular soil tests also helped to maintain calcium and magnesium levels, with lime applied when needed.

“At this stage we’re not saving money but our yield hasn’t been affected and overall it feels like we are getting there,” he said.

“This is something I’ve always wanted to do – get the soils back up.”

Robert's farm is 6km from the ocean “as the crow flies”.

Two of the parcels of land have three creeks running through them and one shares a boundary with national park land.

The Bonassis constructed silt ponds a decade or so ago with the help of another Federal Government Reef grant and most of their drains run into them. They have spoon and grassed drains to slow the flow of water off the paddock.

“It’s all about getting a good balance – good returns on the soil while minimising run-off to the very best of our ability,” he said.

“I always remember visiting an older farmer on a trip in my late-20s as part of a Young Farmers group. That was more than 25 years ago and he had already moved to 1.8m rows.

“He told us if you’re making changes, give it 110%. That’s what I do now. What worked well last year doesn’t always work well this year, so it keeps you on your toes.”

Continues next page ►

Pictured: Herbert River grower Robert Bonassi is using mill by-products and soil testing to improve soil health and reduce nitrogen inputs.





"He told us if you're making changes, give it 110%. That's what I do now. What worked well last year doesn't always work well this year, so it keeps you on your toes."

Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership extension officer **Jarrod Sartor** said incremental change was the way forward for growers.

"An important message when reducing fertiliser is not to drop it by too much too quickly or without fixing other constraints, or you risk losing productivity," he said.

"By regular soil testing, ameliorating with mill by-products and lime and using legumes as a break crop, you can constantly improve the soil to better use the fertiliser being placed."

Smartcane BMP

It isn't just through the Reef Trust Program that Robert is working to improve his farm's productivity and sustainability credentials.

He is also an accredited Smartcane BMP grower, having been an early adopter of the industry project back in 2016.

"I was pretty confident that I was doing the right thing, but I wanted to be sure and also have that accreditation to prove it," Robert said.

"I didn't really need to make any changes to practices, with the exception of record-keeping where I needed to tweak a few things, but overall it was pretty painless and once the transaction was complete and we had that accreditation there haven't been any dramas with maintaining it." ■



Australian Government

R E E F T R U S T



CANEGROWERS winds up long-standing member investment fund

After almost half a century helping successive generations of Queensland sugarcane farmers make the most of their hard-earned cash, June marked the end of an era for CANEGROWERS with the winding up of the last of its long-running commercial services companies.

It was a bittersweet moment for CANEGROWERS Financial Services manager **Tony Libke**, who, together with business partner **Ash Utting**, had operated the company since 1981, first as Queensland Cane Growers Council employees and later as contractors.

Originally created as QCGC Financial Services Pty Ltd, the company was one of the loosely named 'associated companies' formed in the mid-1970s to offer commercial services to members.

These included QCGC Insurance Services, QCGC Publications and QCGC Superannuation, for which Tony and Ash were also responsible.

"Ash was employed as Commercial Advisor with QCGC in the mid-70s, and was instrumental in setting up the commercial services arm of the organisation," said Tony, who was employed by the organisation in 1981 to help operate the Financial Services and Superannuation side of the business.

"I have some great memories from that time. I met a lot of great people, both within the organisation and the growers who we interacted with a great deal.

"We used to go on an annual tour around the growing districts to educate growers on financial matters. They were pretty special tours in their day. We'd take a banker, usually someone from the Commonwealth Development Bank, and we'd take a partner of a law firm so they could talk about estate planning, and sometimes we'd even take a stockbroker.

"We'd fly to Cairns and then do a road trip down the coast, doing full days in each place and attracting 60 to 120 growers coming along to each meeting. They were pretty awesome times."

At the height of its popularity the cash trust, which pooled and invested grower

money for the highest possible return, had over 300 members and managed more than \$40 million.

In the mid-80s, CANEGROWERS decided to step back from the commercial activities and focus more on its core business of lobbying and grower representation.

"At that stage we left the organisation and started our own company where we continued to offer both the superannuation and financial services on behalf of canegrowers," Tony said.

In 2013, CANEGROWERS Retirement Fund, which managed over \$90 million on behalf of more than 1000 members, was rolled up into AustSafe Super – a company started by Ash and Tony in 1991. In 2019, AustSafe also ceased to exist following a merger with Sunsuper.

The CANEGROWERS Financial Services company carried on until 2020, pooling and investing member money, but record low interest rates made the cash trust uncompetitive and the final investor transferred out in June.

"Interestingly, the commercial services wing of the organisation was established in the mid-70s when QCGC was under the leadership of a very famous grower, Sir **Joseph McAvoy** – a legend of the industry. The final investor to transition from the trust was his grandson, **Mark McAvoy**," Tony said.

CANEGROWERS Chairman **Paul Schembri** thanked Ash and Tony for their service to members over the years.

"For around 40 years, the Canegrowers Financial Services Investment Trust Fund has provided a valuable service to cane growers, district offices and other investors," Mr Schembri said.

"Unfortunately, due to historic low interest rates, significantly increased regulatory burdens and trends for many investors to move to internet banking activity, the Board decided the time was right to cease operating the fund.

"On behalf of CANEGROWERS, I'd like to thank Ash and Tony for the wonderful job they have done over the decades, managing members investments and helping educate growers on financial matters through their popular annual tours of the districts.

"I'd also like to thank members for their loyalty and support of the Investment Trust Fund over many years." ■

Pictured: Canegrowers Financial Services manager Tony Libke reminisces with a Canegrowers Retirement Fund brochure from the 1980s.



QSL MARKET UPDATE

Current as of 22 June 2020.

Sugar



- Sugar prices spent most of the past month pushing higher as the global economic environment improved post-coronavirus and risk appetite returned.
- Price action has largely been dictated by investor activity, with speculators shifting from a net-short to a net-long position, seemingly comfortable to invest in sugar as the oil price and Brazilian currency strengthen.
- Fundamentals remain very much on the side lines at present, with the record Brazilian sugar production largely priced in and the market requiring those physical sugars to meet global demand following small Northern hemisphere crops.
- A gradual return of ethanol demand in Brazil has seen improvements in ethanol prices, which will support the lower end of the broader 11 to 13-cent ICE 11 trading range going forward.
- **Risks Ahead:** With COVID-19 rising in Brazil, any supply disruptions will be seen as an upside risk. Meanwhile recovering monsoons in Thailand and India will be closely monitored for any bearish impact later in the calendar year.

Currency



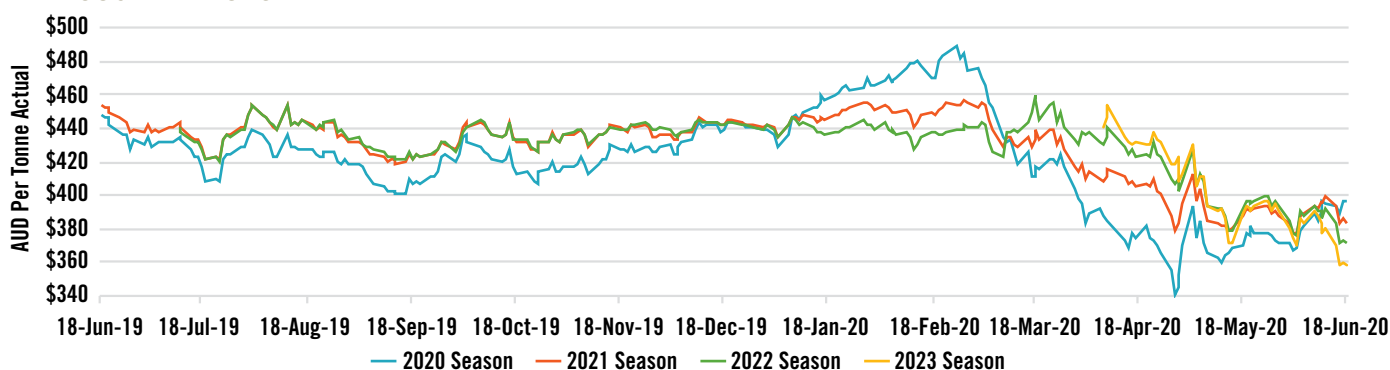
- Like sugar, currency action has also been dominated by the macro environment. Insatiable investor risk appetite as well as a high correlation to US equities, which have been running hot since late March, have seen the Aussie up as high as 0.7063 during the month.
- Tensions between the US and China have subsided, with US domestic issues dominating White House attention. Meanwhile, the Chinese continue to voice their displeasure at Canberra for calling for an investigation into the origins of the virus, their latest target being Australian education exports.
- Concerns around a second wave of coronavirus infections have been rising as infection rates increase across Southern US states and lockdowns return to parts of Beijing, while emerging nations such as Brazil and India are still struggling to control the initial outbreak.
- **Risks Ahead:** Immediate headwinds for the Aussie Dollar are clear, with the virus still present and Chinese tensions simmering. Following a rapid recovery from its mid-March low of 55 cents a pullback to the mid-60 cent range as the Aussie begins to decouple from US equities remains a possibility. Looking further ahead, Australia's relatively smaller economic impact from the virus compared with other nations stands our currency in good stead to retest the 70 cent mark and push on past that.

KEY INDICATORS

	18/06/2020	Monthly change
ICE11 Prompt (JUL20)	12.11 USc/lb	1.31 USc/lb
Brazilian Real/\$US exchange rate	5.22 BRL	-0.49 BRL
Brent Crude Oil	\$US40.71/barrel	\$US5.66
Ethanol/Raw Sugar Parity	10.28 USc/lb	2.25 USc/lb
Net Spec Position	31,000 (net long)	68,000

	18/06/2020	Monthly change
\$AUS/\$US exchange rate	\$US0.6878	\$US0.0453
\$US Index	97.013	-2.652
Chinese Yen/\$US exchange rate	7.07 CNY	-0.03 CNY
S+P 500 Index	3,113.49	159.58
RBA Overnight Cash Rate	0.25%	-

RAW SUGAR PRICES



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

Disclaimer: This report contains information of a general or summary nature and is based on information available to QSL from many sources. While all care is taken in the preparation of this report, the reliability, accuracy or completeness of the information provided in the document is not guaranteed. The update on marketing and pricing activity does not constitute financial, investment advice. You should seek your own financial advice and read the QSL Pricing Pool Terms, which are contained on QSL's website. Nothing contained in this report should be relied upon as a representation as to future matters or that a particular outcome will be achieved. Information about past performance is not an indication of future performance. The information in the report is current as at the time of publication and is subject to change, as the information is based on many assumptions and is subject to uncertainties inherent in any market. QSL does not accept any responsibility to any person for the decisions and actions taken by that person with respect to any of the information contained in this report.

QSL GROWER PRICING UPDATE



Grower Pricing



- > Despite improvements in sugar prices, prices for Australian sugar producers have been confined to the lower end of recent ranges due to the strong rally in our dollar.
- > A near-term correction in the currency may provide a pricing window, provided ICE11 prices continue their upward trajectory. However, upside will be limited under current macro conditions.
- > Rolling for the JUL20 portion of the 2020 Target Price Contract was completed on 22 June, with a roll cost of 58 cents.

KEY DATES

30 June: Last day to qualify for the 2019-Season Loyalty Bonus.

RECENT GROWER FILLS – QSL TARGET PRICE CONTRACT

SEASON	PRICE	DATE
2020	\$342.91	29/04/20
2021	\$405.67	20/04/20
2022	\$430.00	22/04/20

HIGHEST PRICES ACHIEVED – QSL TARGET PRICE CONTRACT

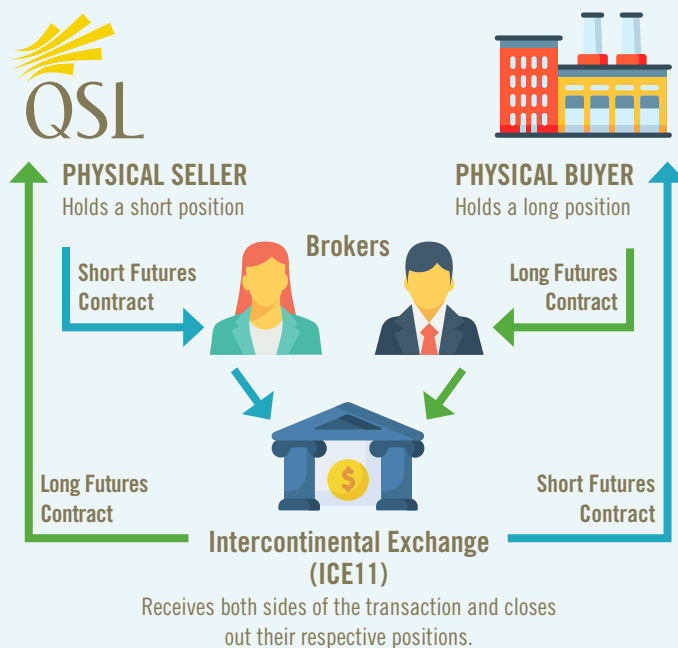
SEASON	PRICE	DATE
2020	\$490.00	23/02/20
2021	\$460.00	03/03/20
2022	\$470.00	17/03/20

Please see the Raw Sugar Prices chart opposite for the Target Price Contract's full trading range.

Expiry Explained



- > As each of the four ICE 11 contracts comes to an end, the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) gives buyers and sellers until the end of the preceding month to close out their positions. This deadline is known as the contract expiry.
- > As a physical sugar seller, QSL progressively accumulates short (sell) futures positions as we undertake our pricing decisions, while our customers/buyers hedge their risk by accumulating long (buy) futures positions. Before expiry each party, via their brokers, will exchange their futures contracts to close out their accumulated positions. This is called an **Against Actuals** transaction and in our case, QSL will receive longs (to close out our shorts) while we give up shorts to our customer (to close out their longs).
- > The ICE connects buyers and sellers through futures contracts. If you choose not to close out your position, it means that you are obligated to deliver or receive the physical sugar that underwrites the futures contract. The term “**deliver (or receive) to/from the tape**” is the jargon commonly used to describe sugar that doesn't have a set destination and will be exchanged between counterparties that hold open positions at expiry. Primarily the play space of major global tradehouses, the tape deals in sugars that must be collected from “A port in the country of origin or in the case of landlocked countries, at a berth or anchorage in the customary port of export”, as per ICE contract specifications.



- > Sugar market participants pay close attention to the volume of sugar delivered to the tape because it gives us a good indication of current supply and demand conditions and the likely direction of near-term price action. The general rule of thumb is a large delivery = plentiful supply = downward pressure on prices, and vice versa.

Sunsuper's Dreams for a Better World grants

COVID-19 has challenged many Australians in unimaginable ways but has also shown the resilience of local charities who continue to help thousands of Australians during these difficult times.

Sunsuper is once again lending a helping hand to community groups through its Dreams for a Better World program and is looking to fund local initiatives that provide long-term benefits to Australian communities.

If your small business, not-for-profit organisation or social enterprise has the plan to make a positive and lasting impact in your local community, you can apply for a share of \$150,000 in grants to help make your dream become a reality.

Business grants are available for small businesses wanting to tackle issues in their local community. Social enterprises or community-minded businesses can apply for a 'Better Business' grant up until 5pm AEST on Friday 31 July 2020. Visit dreamsforabetterworld.com.au/apply for more details on how to apply.

Sunsuper's Dreams for a Better World program partners with community groups, not-for-profit organisations and

small businesses to help them dream big and do good and is now in its tenth year.

"We're very proud to be helping grassroots causes make a difference in Australian communities," says CEO Bernard Reilly. "Our Dreams for a Better World program is an ongoing commitment from us and we're looking forward to receiving applications for a share of the \$150,000 in grants we'll award later this year."

For more information or to apply, visit Sunsuper's Dreams for a Better World dreamsforabetterworld.com.au

Pictured: Supertees - Sunsuper's Dreams for a Better World 2019 winner.

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New partnership to pave the way for

NEW CANE PLANTING TECHNOLOGY

New Energy Farms (NEF) and Sugar Research Australia (SRA) have announced they have entered into a License Agreement to undertake research and development to introduce the NEF CEEDS™ technology into the Australian sugarcane industry.



NEF is a crop technology company, established in 2010, to develop artificial seeds for crops that do not produce conventional seeds, such as sugarcane.

NEF developed and patented the unique and disruptive CEEDS™ technology for the multiplication and planting of sugarcane crops worldwide.

CEEDS™ are small coated propagules directly drilled in the field like conventional seed.

NEF have already licensed CEEDS™ for commercial sugarcane use in other key sugarcane markets including Brazil and Central America.

The collaboration will utilise NEF's extensive CEEDS™ experience in propagation of perennial grasses, in sugarcane and other high biomass crops like Miscanthus and energy cane.

Testing will commence this season to evaluate the response of current and emerging Australian varieties in the production of CEEDS™ artificial seed.

Subsequent trials will examine germination, plant establishment and crop performance under a range of Australian production conditions.

"Establishing the crop is a major cost in sugarcane production. The value of just the sugarcane used for planting is around \$25 million every year," explained SRA Executive Manager for Variety Development and Processing, Dr Jason Eglinton.

"New approaches in planting systems to release this industry value have been research topics before, but recent technological advances suggest it could now become a reality.

"This work will produce an understanding of the benefits and costs of the technology to inform potential adoption pathways.

"CEEDS™ also offers indirect benefits including the ability for growers to more rapidly change their variety mix and control of issues such as Ratoon Stunting Disease," he said.

The Agreement will allow NEF to provide SRA with patented CEEDS™ technology to produce artificial seeds for the current and future sugarcane varieties in the Australian market.

"We are extremely pleased to have entered this License Agreement with SRA and we are very aware of the high level of respect in Australia and the wider sugarcane industry for their research and technology transfer activities," said Dr Paul Carver, CEO of New Energy Farms. ■

Pictured: CEEDS are small coated propagules directly drilled in the field like conventional seed.



Tech takes off in vine control trials

Since they burst onto the scene several years ago, Remote Piloted Aircraft (RPA) have promised much as high-tech tools delivering productivity gains across the agricultural sector. Working in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), CANEGROWERS Innisfail has set about determining if the hype surrounding agricultural drones stacks up, undertaking a three year spray drone trial targeting invasive vines in crops across the region. The results so far are encouraging and it could be a case of 'stow your tray tables in the upright position' as growers get on-board with technology that is taking off.

BY JOHN FLYNN

Another imposing cloud scud swept towards the Palmerston Range as Innisfail grower Paul Cecchi took the *Australian Canegrower* on a tour of his family's home farm at Coorumba in the red soil hills behind Innisfail, just days out from the scheduled commencement of the 2020 harvest.

As any local will tell you, in this part of Queensland's Wet Tropics expect the rain to continue up until the Innisfail show in

mid-July. It's typically an anxious period for the district's farmers and the miller too, as the weather plays its usual chess game and productivity sits on a knife edge.

Farming successfully in this country has always meant innovating.

It's something which has become habit for Paul, his brother David and their father Arthur, one of Innisfail's senior

growers, who set his sons on a path of technological advancement from their earliest years.

When Arthur first started out farming with his brother Robert, the pair purchased a billet planter which through Robert's hard work and persistence became an invaluable tool in their farming system.

Since then the family has continued to embrace new technology. From high-

"This is red convulvulus, it's pretty nasty because it's persistent, it just keeps coming at you ... you think you've got it beat, then ... it'll come again and you could have an acre or two acres in the middle of your block and you won't even know about it."

Pictured: (main) Arthur Cecchi with sons Paul (left) and David, (below) Paul with Red Convolvulus infestation.



rise spraying to variable rate herbicide and nutrient application, GPS precision farming... name your technology and the Cecchi family has not only been an early adopter, in many cases it has been an industry pioneer.

It was no different when CANEGROWERS Innisfail and DAF approached the family to get involved with a new agricultural spray drone trial.

"Any technology that's new to the industry or the area we sort of put our hand up," Paul Cecchi explained as father and sons tucked into morning smoko in a hut behind their machinery shed.

"If they know about it, they'll bring an idea to us."

The Cecchi family was an ideal candidate for the spray drone trial and not just because of their track record of innovation. The red soil hills near East Palmerston are also perfectly suited to one of the region's most annoying agricultural pests, the invasive vine red convulvulus.

Fast growing and capable of scattering a seed load that will regenerate over several years, red convulvulus can wreak havoc on productivity as it effectively suffocates the cane crop and makes harvesting a nightmare.

Control is generally undertaken by conventional means with a high-rise

sprayer but the vine can get away quickly, particularly in the wetter months when blocks become difficult to access or cane becomes lodged due to wind.

In more severe cases, vine suppression can require an aerial intervention which, up until recently, has meant the considerable expense of a fixed wing aircraft or helicopter.

A close-up look along one headland revealed a patch of red convulvulus creeping its way up the stool of a cane plant. If not dealt with quickly, the distinct red flowers of *Ipomoea hederifolia* will go to seed and the vine will become much harder to control.

"This is red convulvulus, it's pretty nasty because it's persistent, it just keeps coming at you," Paul explained as he identified another patch of the vine invading his cane.

"You spray at the out-of-hand stage and you think you've got it beat, then you have a patch of lodged cane and it'll come again and you could have an acre or two acres in the middle of your block and you won't even know about it.

"If you don't control it, when you go to harvest it wraps the harvester and tangles the harvester up.

Continues next page ►





"So we just target the patches that we know there's persistent vine pressure and we'll fly the drone in there and we'll pick up the odd straggler or if there's a bad patch we can take it out."

"It's not only that it damages the stool, it pulls and tugs out the stool and damages the stool for future years."

In a neighbouring block, a withered red convolvulus vine has met a more decisive fate at the hands of the latest weapon deployed by CANEGROWERS in the war against weeds.

It was one of the blocks targeted during the trial of CANEGROWERS new agricultural spray drone (pictured above).

The DJI Agras MG-1 is a combined industry resource that has been made available to growers during the three-year trial in association with the Coastal Farming Systems team at DAF.



Hangered at DAF's South Johnstone research facility and piloted by DAF's Senior Development Officer **Marcus Bulstrode**, who is also monitoring the trial, the octo-copter is capable of carrying a ten-litre liquid payload. The set-up is designed for targeted application and spot spraying of hard-to-reach vine infestations.

"With the drone, we know where the bad patches are through farm maps and from our spraying regimes over the years, we've got it all marked and on our GPS screens," Paul explained.

"So we just target the patches that we know there's persistent vine pressure and we'll fly the drone in there and we'll pick up the odd straggler or if there's a bad patch we can take it out."

"If you can't get in with the high-rise sprayer or anything like that, you target these patches and hopefully get them cleaned up."

Spray drones have obvious limitations. They can't carry the sort of payload required for broadacre herbicide application and battery life limits flight time.

There are also the not-insignificant hurdles associated with licensing and operation of larger RPA's which come under the justifiably strict rules of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

Nonetheless, the Cecchi brothers see an opportunity to incorporate spray drone technology into their daily farming operations and have already purchased a smaller consumer level drone that can be used for mapping the blocks and

identifying areas to target for herbicide application with the larger spray drone.

The concept is a work-in-progress, but with farms both in the red soil hill country and on the coast, it makes sense to incorporate a spray drone into the crop management mix to touch-up vine infestations in-between regular high-rise herbicide applications.

"Because we spray a bit of area and our farms are stretched out a bit, when we leave the Palmerston and head down to our flat country in Mourilyan, we mightn't come back for two weeks or so," David Cecchi explained.

"It's good to be able to fly the paddocks up here so you know when you come back in two weeks that you haven't let the weeds get out of hand."

As someone who grew up with a cane knife in hand, Arthur Cecchi could be excused for expecting the rise of machines to have reached its crescendo with mechanical harvesting.

After 60 years of farming, he's welcoming the era of remote farming systems and warmly recalls the first time DAF dropped in with a camera drone and iPad to survey the farm.

"I was more or less amazed, it was like a camera being there when he showed me back at the iPad," Arthur said. "He said this is where it is, there's a patch here and a patch here."

"I said, 'Go over there, there might be some on that side', so he flew over and

Pictured: (main) DAF's Senior Development Officer Marcus Bulstrode with the DJI Agras MG-1.

Continues page 28 ►



there was a little patch on the headland, he picked it up straight away. It was really an eye opener for me."

The reaction of senior growers like Arthur Cecchi is consistent with the interest Marcus Bulstrode has seen in the new technology in his role at DAF's South Johnstone research facility.

"When you can get an older cane grower to say 'Look at all the things that I can now see that I couldn't see previously on my farm' and through a fairly simple bit of technology, that just shows to me

"We jumped at the chance to get involved because we saw a benefit for growers, especially in the Wet Tropics."

the scope for the use within the industry that the technology will have," said Mr Bulstrode.

Ultimately, given the licensing requirements, Mr Bulstrode believes the situation moving forward will see commercial service providers step into the drone space to provide services such as aerial spraying.

At the same time, the trial has reinforced the role that can be played by consumer drones in farming systems, not only for crop surveying, but in the developing field of nutrient mapping where technology, software in particular, is becoming more readily affordable.

"When it comes to the mapping, my view is that the ideal situation would be for the grower to have their own drone, do their own mapping and do that multiple times a year," Mr Bulstrode said.

"Drone technology is not expensive and because of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority guidelines at the moment, if it's less than two kilos, growers can actually

fly the drones on their own properties across their farm and do that job."

The spray drone trial is also another example of CANEGROWERS providing services to members that help expand their engagement with new technology and industry innovation. That's why CANEGROWERS Innisfail was eager to team up with DAF to get the trial up and running.

"We jumped at the chance to get involved because we saw a benefit for growers, especially in the Wet Tropics," CANEGROWERS Innisfail Chairman Joe Marano said (pictured). "This was another avenue just to support the growers, doing our bit to keep them abreast of what's happening with the industry."

"It's all part of a process of trying to engage with members and keep them up with modern times." ■

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ADAMA ANNOUNCES NEW HERBICIDE FOR USE IN CANE

Supplied by Adama

Global crop protection company, ADAMA Australia, has announced the commercial release of Palmero® TX herbicide, which provides long-lasting, broad spectrum control of key grasses and broadleaf weeds in plant and ratoon cane.

ADAMA Australia Herbicide Portfolio Manager, Stuart Moncrieff, says Palmero TX is a unique co-formulation of the active ingredients, terbuthylazine (Group C) and isoxaflutole (Group H).

"This is the first registration for the use of terbuthylazine for sugarcane in Australia, so it's big news for the industry," he says.

"Terbuthylazine is a new triazine herbicide that controls target weeds by inhibiting a specific step in photosynthesis.

"Isoxaflutole also inhibits an enzyme involved in photosynthesis but at a different stage of the process.

"Combining these two actives into one, easy-to-use water dispersible granule formulation reduces the need to tank-mix to broaden the weed spectrum.

"The combination of Group C and Group H herbicides are often synergistic due to their combined effects on inhibiting photosynthesis in target weeds."

Palmero TX can be applied as a directed spray in plant and ratoon cane or as a broadcast application in ratoons after harvest up to the two-leaf crop stage.

Trials conducted in Australia between 2015 and 2019 demonstrate that

Palmero TX provides equivalent or superior control when compared to industry standard tank-mixes of key grasses and broadleaf weeds up to three months after treatment.

Stuart says Palmero TX is an ideal rotation partner for ADAMA Australia's existing sugarcane herbicides, Bobcat® i-MAXX SG (Group B/C) and Bobcat® Combi (Group C), for sustainable weed control in sugarcane.

"It's important that growers use a range of management strategies to control weeds," he says.

"Rotating between herbicides with different modes of action reduces selection pressure for herbicide resistance.

"For resistance management, controlling emerged weeds and improved crop safety, we recommend that Palmero TX and Bobcat i-MAXX are always applied in a tank-mix with ADAMA's paraquat herbicide Spraytop®."

Stuart says ADAMA is continuing to invest in innovation for the sugarcane industry.

"In particular, we are focussed on developing alternatives to offset restrictions on the use of existing herbicides, such as 2,4-D and Diuron.

"Applying a product with a strong residual on target weeds in plant and ratoon cane, such as Palmero TX or Bobcat i-MAXX, reduces the frequency or need for 2,4-D applications during the season," he says.

The use of Palmero TX will be supported by the free ADAMA ReefAware app, a simple 'stop-go' decision support tool that determines which herbicides can be applied to a specific paddock at a specific time of year.

"We're committed to helping growers and agronomists to implement effective and sustainable weed control programs," Stuart says.

"ReefAware allows growers and agronomists to select and use ADAMA products with confidence."

For further information, contact your local ADAMA representative. ■



ReefAware



Bobcat i-MAXX SG applied at 565 g/ha with Spraytop 250 herbicide as a directed spray prior to canopy closure providing residual control of key grass and broadleaf weeds 11 weeks after application in a recent field trial at Marian, QLD.



Palmero TX an ideal rotational option with Bobcat i-MAXX for residual weed control. Palmero TX applied at 1.5 kg/ha with Spraytop 250 as a directed spray prior to canopy closure providing robust control of key grass and broadleaf weeds, 11 weeks after application in an ADAMA field trial at Marian, QLD.



Untreated control at the Marian, QLD 2020 ADAMA field trial.



HARVESTERS FIRE UP FOLLOWING STALLED SEASON START

The 2020 harvest is underway in Australia, with an estimated 30.9 million tonnes of sugarcane set to be crushed at 24 sugar mills by year's end. It was a far from a perfect start to the season, with widespread rain and mill mechanical issues delaying operations in Queensland from Mossman to Mackay.

MSF's Tableland Mill was first cab off the rank, starting crushing on 3 June.

However, despite having ideal harvesting conditions, it's been a tale of two mills for Tableland growers, with those supplying MSF getting off to the perfect start, while those supplying Mossman have faced delays due to mechanical issues at the mill.

"There have definitely been some teething problems with Mossman Mill," CANEGROWERS Tableland Chairman **Claude Santucci** said.

"They started crushing around mid-June, but the first two weeks have been plagued with mechanical problems that have resulted in delayed and stale cane.

"But they've only recently finished a major refurbishment at the mill, so its not unexpected to have some problems. They just need to find that sweet spot."

CANEGROWERS Mossman Chairman **Glen Fasano** said grower representatives would be meeting with the mill to discuss stale cane payments.

"The problem is that once they fired up the mill, cane was harvested and delivered, but then problems with the boiler kicked in and they couldn't crush it. So they were left with a whole heap of stale cane.

"This happened twice in the first two weeks. So we'll be meeting with the mill so discuss the stale cane clause and payments for growers," Mr Fasano said.

Mechanical issues also plagued the first weeks of crushing at Mulgrave Mill, resulting in delayed cane.

Meanwhile, widespread rainfall across north Queensland delayed harvesting operations in Tully, Innisfail, Herbert River, the Burdekin and Mackay.

But it wasn't all bad news, with the rain giving a welcome boost to crops in many districts.

Despite a week-long delay to the start of harvest, CANEGROWERS Burdekin Chairman **Phil Marano** was happy with how the season is progressing.

"Inkermann Mill was expected to start crushing on 2 June, but due to the rain Wilmar was forced to change the mill start dates based on where it was dry enough to harvest, so it was Invicta that started first on 10 June," Mr Marano said.

"It would have been nice to start on time, but at the end of the day, the crop got a bit of a boost from the rain and we have wet weather days factored into the season length anyway, so there's still every chance we'll finish on schedule.

"So far, so good!" ■



WHERE ARE YOU ON THE SMARTCANE BMP JOURNEY?

By Kate Gowdie
Smartcane BMP Manager

The Smartcane Best Management Practice (BMP) program commenced in 2014, and with well over 95% accredited grower retention, is one of the most successful industry-owned accreditation programs of its kind. Smartcane BMP accredited growers manage over 30% of Queensland's cane area.

Becoming certified is an opportunity for you to have your farming practices officially recognised as meeting or exceeding the industry standards.

The program is currently experiencing exceptionally high uptake, with over 160 accreditations in the past 12 months and total accreditations now exceeding 560.

Participation in the program is completely voluntary and available to all Queensland cane growers.

The Smartcane BMP program, managed through CANEGROWERS, has funding through the State Government, which currently enables us to provide registration, self-assessment/benchmarking, pre-audit and/or auditing services at no cost to the grower.

This funding is available until 2022.

The journey to accreditation involves registration, followed by a self-assessment to benchmark your farming practices against industry standards.

"For some growers, moving from benchmarking to accreditation involves little more than tweaking of records."

Over 75% of the Queensland cane area has been benchmarked against the Smartcane BMP core industry

standards for soil health and nutrients, irrigation and drainage, and weed, pest and disease management.

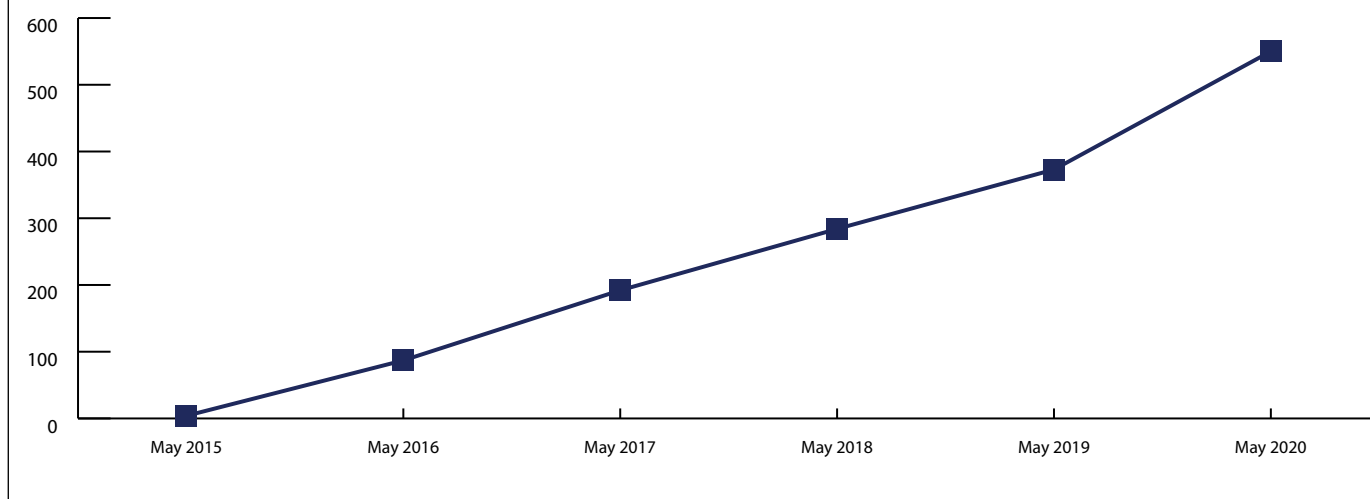
For some growers, moving from benchmarking to accreditation involves little more than tweaking of records.

Others may seek to change some of their practices, their equipment or their record-keeping tools before embarking on accreditation.

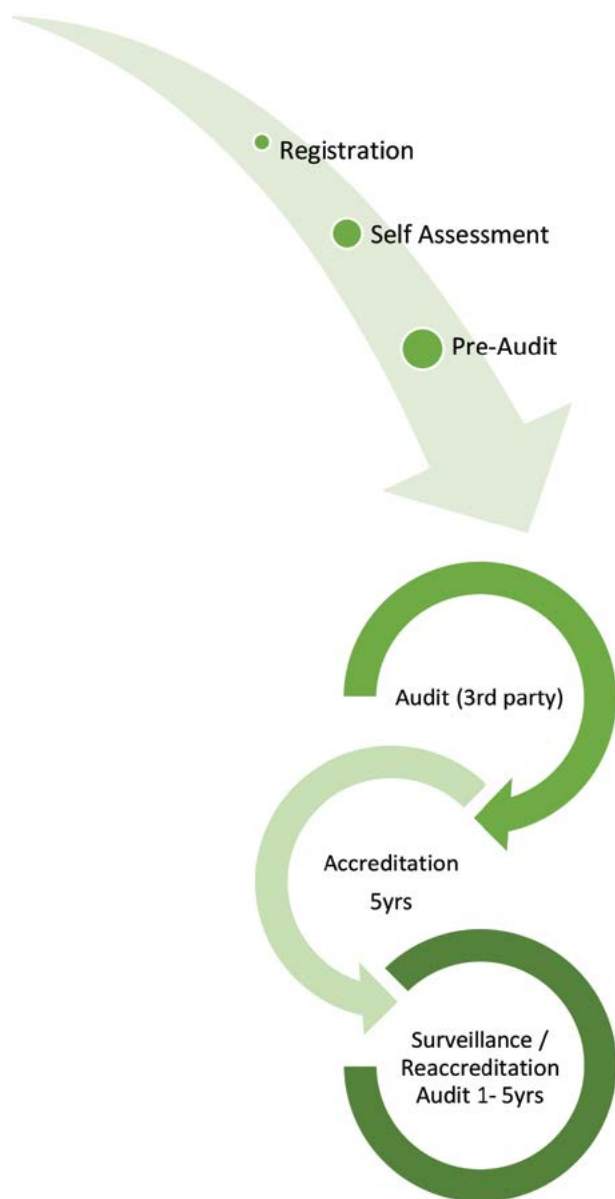
As every business is different, the time it takes to complete the Smartcane BMP accreditation journey is different for everyone.

If you are yet to register or have been benchmarked for some time and are unsure about how you can progress, please contact your local Smartcane BMP facilitator who is there to assist you every step of the way.

SMARTCANE BMP ACCREDITED ENTERPRISES OVER TIME



THE SMARTCANE BMP JOURNEY



REGISTRATION

Yet to register?

Visit www.smartcane.com.au and click on the Register tab on the home page or call your local Smartcane BMP Facilitator.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Completed your self-assessment and are now benchmarked?

Do you need to update your assessment?

Access the grower home page of the Smartcane BMP website or contact local Smartcane BMP Facilitator for assistance.

NEED HELP?

Working towards accreditation but unsure how to proceed?

Contact your local Smartcane BMP facilitator to help you reach your goals. Facilitators can provide you with record keeping tools and other resources to help you achieve accreditation.

ACCREDITED

Have you considered benchmarking your business against the Smartcane BMP non-core modules?

Visit the grower home page of the smartcane bmp website or speak to your facilitator to find out more.

Give us your feedback! How can we improve the Smartcane BMP program? To share your ideas, email BMP_Administrator@canegrowers.com.au.

Your journey to Smartcane BMP accreditation checklist

- ☒ Register details on the Smartcane BMP database
- ☒ Complete self-assessments/benchmarking in the minimum three core modules (1-3) captured on the Smartcane BMP database
- ☒ Use results of self-assessment to identify areas for improvement (if required) and implement before progressing to the next step
- ☒ Undertake an on-farm pre-audit
- ☒ Successful audit = Accreditation
- ☒ Check/Surveillance audit conducted between 1-5 years
- ☒ Reaccreditation audit conducted at five years

Our network of facilitators with a wealth of industry expertise and Smartcane BMP know-how are here to assist you on your Smartcane BMP journey. Find your nearest facilitator by visiting www.smartcane.com.au ■

CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

Supplied by CANEGROWERS district offices

MOSSMAN

Activity around the Mossman township slowly returned to more normal levels in time for the start of the 2020 crushing, which kicked off on Tuesday 16 June 2020.

As predicted, it was a warmer than usual winter build up to the start of harvest, even though the start was three weeks later than in the previous few years. The damp weather also hung around, with some showers before and during the first week of crushing.

The first and second weeks of the Mossman crushing have been plagued by mechanical issues, mainly linked to the boiler. This resulted in unprecedented levels of stale cane in the two weeks which has had to be dealt with outside the CAP by our Industry Management Group. Mill workers are working around the clock trying to diagnose the root of the problem.

In the first week of crushing, Mossman Mill processed 9,067 tonnes of cane, almost all of this as delayed cane. A

coastal mill average of 9.5CCS was adopted for payment purposes in Week 1 and this will be adjusted in due course once the Industry Management Group agrees on how to deal with this exceptional situation.

Far Northern Milling held their pre-season meetings for Coastal and Tableland growers on 27 May 2020. The meeting was held at the Sugar Shed to accommodate social distancing and was well attended by Mossman growers, who heard the latest update on mill maintenance work, capital upgrades and replacements, and company business.

There will be an election in the Mossman Mill region for the QSL Grower Representative, with two nominees for the one position. Mossman Mill growers must get their votes back to QSL by 5pm, 17 July 2020.

CANEGROWERS Mossman wishes all local members and the wider industry a safe and successful 2020 cane harvest.



CAIRNS

Crushing commenced at Mulgrave Mill on Tuesday 16 June. The start was very rocky with some difficult to resolve problems causing lengthy delays. This led to delayed cane and all the associated problems. CANEGROWERS elected representatives remained in daily contact with MSF management regarding the situation.

Wet weather across most of the region has hampered harvesting and planting operations. Not ideal conditions for farming activities in any respects.

At the time of writing, the commencement of crushing at South Johnstone Mill had been delayed due to wet weather. The Babinda area had received widespread falls.

CANEGROWERS Cairns Region, in collaboration with CANEGROWERS Bundaberg, has remained active regarding the Reef Regulations petition. For those who may not wish to go online, please call into either office where there is an option to sign a paper copy.

INNISFAIL

Commencement of crushing at South Johnstone mill for the 2020 season was delayed until 24 June due to the wet conditions preventing harvesting operations. All the time lost since 18 June will be registered against wet weather. There are 21 days allocated in the crushing plan for lost time due to wet weather, if this is exceeded, then the Season Length Agreement is extended.

The pre-season estimate has 1,433,524 tonnes to be crushed at South Johnstone Mill. The current weather conditions are not providing any additional benefit for growth.

The Australian Sugar Museum has reopened after being forced to close with the COVID-19 restrictions. There are a number of restrictions with a limit of 20 in the museum at any time. The museum has a COVID-19 Safe Plan in place.

Twelve local growers have signed up to participate in the Project Catalyst Broader Adoption Validation (BAV) on their farms on 2020/21. The BAV on-farm activities will be supported by Extension Support Officer, Peter Becke.

TULLY

The 2020 cane harvest commenced on 9 June, however wet conditions resulted in only a few harvesters being able to operate. The first cane was crushed early on 11 June and since then things have been stop/start in line with the rain.

The first 21 days of June have seen 199mm of rain recorded over 18 days. Despite this, over 90,000 tonnes of cane have been crushed with an average CCS of 10.82.

While it is early days, and cane harvested to date may not be indicative of the balance for harvest, the Tully crop has grown since March and is now looking to be a better than average yielding crop. The CCS is also promising given the wet harvest conditions.

Land preparation for planting has been held up due to the weather and it will be a busy time catching up. The outlook for the coming week is for dry cool conditions, so we should see all harvesters back in the paddock operating, and a rise in CCS.

HERBERT RIVER

The 2020 crush finally got underway on 24 June following a late start to the season due to the poor weather conditions that also delayed planting operations.

While the delayed start was not ideal, the crop has benefited from the rainfall. The downside is that small mill samples across the district have shown low CCS levels, but this is beginning to improve.

Due to COVID-19, the CANEGROWERS Herbert River office has been operating under social-distancing restrictions since reopening on 25 May, with appointments only visits in place. However, with the further easing of restrictions across the state, the office will resume normal operations in late-July, enabling growers to visit without prior appointment.

We are continuing to increase BMP accreditations in the district and I'm happy to announce that we have surpassed 100 businesses accredited in the Herbert River District, including all CANEGROWERS Herbert River board members.

The area accredited in the Herbert has reached 25,676 hectares, or 41.6% of the district's total cane land. The registered and benchmarked area is 58,613 ha, meaning around 95% of all cane land in the Herbert is moving towards accreditation.

BURDEKIN

Crushing for the 2020 season is finally underway following delays to harvest commencement due to wet weather which required Wilmar to change mill starting dates based on where it was dry enough to source sufficient cane.

Inkerman Mill was originally due to kick-off the season on 2 June, but that honour instead went to Invicta Mill, which started crushing on 10 June, followed by Kalamia Mill on 12 June, Inkerman Mill on 14 June, and Pioneer Mill on 15 June.

Growers are feeling more confident about the size of their crop and all the Burdekin now needs is a good stretch of dry weather and minimal factory breakdowns to make some serious headway into getting the crop off to convert the cane into money in the bank.

In regard to the harvest, we would like to acknowledge and thank the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads for early opening up of testing for HR licensing, which was a great help with ensuring there were sufficient licensed drivers available to commence the season.

Then Federal Government recently announced their rescheduled dates for the Senate Committee's public hearings into the science behind reef regulations. CANEGROWERS Burdekin has been given an opportunity to speak at the hearing in Brisbane on 28 June and we look forward to stating our case in regard to this important issue.

On the subject of reef regulations, we had one of our more senior growers provide us with a copy of a very old letter dated 15/3/1966 from the Queensland Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, which stated that in regard to the Delta, quote:

"observations following the recent heavy rains confirmed that only a small proportion of the rainfall runs out of the Delta area even during such high runoff periods. Although the runoff in the Lake Plain does not flow into what appears to be the main danger areas, it does appear to provide significant recharge in the south-eastern section and thus contributes to the overall reserve of groundwater. The loss that occurs through the escape of surplus runoff to the sea will be reduced by the construction of the proposed tidal barriers."

For this grower, it is proof enough that the Government has known for a very long time that runoff from the Delta is not a substantive issue for the reef.

For CANEGROWERS Burdekin Ltd, we are pleased to advise that, farm sales aside, we have grown our membership base and we would like to welcome these new members to the fold and we look forward to serving our members needs for the 2020 season and onwards.



Continues next page ►

CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

PROSERPINE

The district continues to benefit from recent showers, with falls of between 70mm and 100mm being received over the last few weeks. As a result, planting activity has slowed considerably due to the wet ground conditions. But growers who were able to undertake early planting in April and May are reporting good strike and vigorous growth.

The Sugar Services team have been out and about with their juice testing trailer. Early indications are for a slightly lower

starting CCS this year, although recent rain has undoubtedly impacted results.

Preparations for the 2020 crush are now well advanced with the mill's steam trials finalised and final checks completed.

Harvesting operations are expected to commence on 29 June with crushing to start as scheduled the following day. Growers and harvesting contractors are urged to take care and stay safe during the crushing season.

BUNDABERG

It's still extremely dry with many parts of the district showing signs of moisture stress.

Weather permitting, the start date will be 6 July 2020. Both mills will operate the same as last year, with Millaquin in six-day mode and Bingera in five-day mode.

The estimate is just over one million tonnes and, going by forecast crush rates, we should be finished by the middle of October (this includes two weeks of wet weather).

We have tentatively set the base CCS at 13.30 for both mills and we will adjust it as required throughout the season.

Council Rates

Recent Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy valuations have seen some farmland areas increase in site valuations in excess of 300% across the district. We are informed that the average increase has been 47%.

Unless there is some recognition of capacity to pay in the rating system, many of our cane farmers will be hit with unsustainable rate increases should the existing formula be retained.

Given the reliance on agriculture for the region's economy and future prosperity, we suggested that the total rate dollars collected from Category 9 Agricultural Land remain at 2019 levels due to the global economic uncertainty.

In 2019, Council collected around \$4,960,000 in general rates which represented 5.88% of the total Council Budget. Many of the Councillors pledged to address this issue in their election material before the last election.

Farmers fight reef red tape with online petition

Queensland farmers battling the stealthy rise of Reef Regulations by the Palaszczuk Government are taking the fight direct to State Parliament. An MP-sponsored e-petition seeks to reverse legislation pushed through in 2019.

The e-petition, launched on 2 June, calls for the *Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019* to be revoked. It also demands the establishment of an Office of Science Quality Assurance to check the science being used to make political decisions.

The petition is open to every Queenslanders, and is at <https://bit.ly/3fPCVvf>

Farmers put food on every table and are a vital pillar of our national and state economy, so poor political decisions hurting the sector affect every mum, dad and child in Australia.

The sugar industry is a clean green carbon neutral industry that underpins families and jobs in regional communities. Farmers need support, not more red tape and hoops to jump through when they are already doing a great job.

People living in urban areas know that they rely on farmers to enjoy the healthy, quality produce they eat every day. But what they don't know is that the Queensland Government is strong-arming the farming industry with stealthy over-regulation and unwarranted demands that put further pressures on farmers financially and through increased paperwork. We urge everyone to sign the petition.



MACKAY/PLANE CREEK

Crush delayed by rain

May and June brought beneficial rain which will assist the crop later in the season. But it also meant a delay to the start of the crush. Marian Mill got under way on Thursday 11 June, while Racecourse Mill started the following day. A steam trial to test equipment and processes resulted in the failure of Pan No. 9 at Farleigh Mill with crushing delayed until Saturday 13 June. Mackay Sugar has announced it will spend more than \$70 million on maintenance and capital upgrades this year. Wilmar's Plane Creek Mill began crushing on Tuesday 23 June.

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

Crushing stats week ended: 21 June 2020 (Wk 2)	
Farleigh	48,580
Marian	62,085
Racecourse	33,953
Total	144,618
YTD	171,013 tonnes
CCS Wk	11.17
CCS Ytd	11.18

Solar reduces irrigation costs for Mackay cane farmers

Over the past two years CANEGROWERS Mackay has been working with local suppliers to reduce pumping costs for farmers through the use of solar.

To date local growers have received more than \$2.5 million in government solar rebates. Not only can farmers receive up to \$25,000 per system installed and lower their pumping costs, but they can also access the instant asset write-off for tax purposes and the low cost finance backed by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

For more information please call John Eden on 07 4944 2605 or Ron Coomer on 0448 134 073.

Rural electrical safety awareness training available

CANEGROWERS Mackay has worked with the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (Lorelle Stables) to organise new electrical safety online training through TAFE Queensland. A new micro-credential in Rural Electrical Safety Awareness (MCC00024) is now on offer.

This short course is suitable for sugar industry workers who are required to work near live electrical apparatus, including powerlines.

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

The course is offered online, takes approximately one hour to complete, and costs \$95.

For more information and to enrol, visit the TAFE Queensland website: <https://tafeqld.edu.au/courses/18936/rural-electrical-safety-awareness>

More information: please phone Shelley Dent at CANEGROWERS Mackay office on (07) 4944 2600.

Campaign on land revaluations continues

As reported in the last issue of *Australian Canegrower*, CANEGROWERS Mackay submitted a number of concerns to the Valuer General about the assumptions used for recent land revaluations.

As the primary use of the valuations is by Council in framing its budgets, we also wrote to all Councillors at the same time, enclosing a copy of our letter to the Valuer General.

Following on from responses from Council, CANEGROWERS Mackay has again written to the Mayor, highlighting that while local governments use statutory land valuations as a basis to calculate rates, valuations are just one of many factors taken into account when councils are framing their annual budgets and determining rates.

Local government legislation provides broad powers to Councils to allow them to ameliorate potential impacts on rates caused by changes to valuations – these powers include rate capping and averaging, minimum general rates and differential general rates.

At the time of writing, CANEGROWERS Mackay was seeking Council's due re-consideration of opportunities to provide relief from the potential impacts on rates due to be announced at the end of June. We have urged Council to implement a fair and reasonable outcome for cane growing rate payers in the Mackay/Plane Creek district.

Pictured: Harvesting on Hay Point Road, Mackay.



Continues next page ►

ISIS

Scattered showers received in mid-June were patchy but well received throughout the Isis District nonetheless. Falls of between 15 and 60mm through were recorded.

Crushing at Isis Central Sugar Mill is set to commence on Monday 13 July, with a current estimate of approximately 800,000 tonnes of cane. The estimate reflects another difficult growing season due to very dry conditions over the past 12 months. As a result the mill, which has operated 7 days per week during the last 15 seasons, will crush just five days per week during 2020.

The mill has initiated a \$500/ha planting incentive for this calendar year for cane harvested in the 2021 season. The Isis Sugar Partnership is supporting this initiative and encouraging growers to take this incentive into consideration in planning and decision-making processes for the upcoming season.

Paradise Dam and water security continue to be our number one priority. However, our continuing fight to stop the lowering of the dam wall has become more difficult due to Sunwater commencing lowering work

Our position and priority is to ensure that testing is done to ensure remediation plans are developed so the dam is returned to full capacity.

We are working hard behind the scenes for this to occur through instigating the Adept Economic report with council and other industry bodies to prove future demand for unsold water into the irrigation scheme and active representation on Paradise Dam reference groups and sub committees.

During the month of June, the last of the district soybean crop was harvested. The overall yield results on almost 300 ha of the "later than normal" planted crop were moderate and the higher than average prices were well received by growers.



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MARYBOROUGH

The rumours have been running thick and fast for the past few months around MSF mill and farms. While the board has been attempting to obtain information, until this week, we have had nothing shared.

The Board was advised on 23 June that a buyer has been found for MSF Maryborough's farm holdings, the total area of which is understood to be 5367 hectares. This is yet to be finalised into a contract and the buyer's details are confidential for now.

Our Chairman and Board have responded to this notification with a letter seeking clarification on the impacts to the mill. The initial advice from MSF sugar only talks of the 2020 season and our cane supply agreements now run to 2022.

Our crushing season is fast approaching, with 13 July the agreed start date. The crop estimate remains at 635,000 tonnes.

CANEGROWERS Maryborough will conduct a COVID-19 adjusted pre-season meeting on 8 July. With current restrictions on numbers allowed in a building, we will need to hold two meetings at the hall in Bazaar Street, Maryborough. The first will be 9:30am to 11:30am with limited numbers. The second meeting will be 2:00pm to 4:00pm and also limited numbers. Catering is also impacted by COVID, so no BBQ this year.

Please contact Cam at the office on 0427 577 557 to book your preferred meeting time.

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ROCKY POINT

Rocky Point Mill is still expected to start crushing on 13 July 2020, pending the Cogeneration Plant being operational.

We believe the Cogen plant is having difficulty accessing fuel to burn and is therefore still out of action. The current estimate for the area is 320,000 tonnes.

The district received between 30 and 60mms of rain over the last week.

Land Valuation objections are still ongoing, and we expect to have them lodged before the revised COVID-19 deadline of 1 July.

Rocky Point's Fire Ant Self-Management program has commenced. We have secured some bait from the program, and registered growers have now received their allocation of bait for distribution.



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WE'RE WORKING FOR MEMBERS

CANEGROWERS POLICY UPDATE



Mick Quirk

Environment and Sustainability Manager
CANEGROWERS

Senate Inquiry on reef regs

The Senate Inquiry's public hearings into the science behind reef regulations, which was postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis, will now take place in Brisbane on 27-28 July. CANEGROWERS will appear before the Senate Committee to emphasise the failings of the Queensland Government's regulatory approach.

We will show that these failings affect all the machinery of government related to reef water quality. Until these are rectified, growers will remain suspicious about the justification, design, implementation and reporting of all reef water quality interventions.

Our main recommendations to the Inquiry will be:

- Remove the regulatory burden on growers and adopt long-term support for on-farm innovation;
- Restore growers' confidence in science and policy;
- Ensure water quality targets are credible and realistic; and
- Develop trustworthy methods for evaluating improvements in water quality.

In relation to the science of reef water quality, CANEGROWERS will push for an overhaul of the current system that manages the funding, quality, synthesis and communication of research.

REVIEW OF IMPORT CONDITIONS FOR SUGARCANE GENETIC MATERIAL

CANEGROWERS and other peak bodies are participating in a review by the Australian Government of the conditions for quarantine of all imported live plant material.

Imported clones are used for germplasm improvement in the SRA breeding program, with about 50% of released cultivars having at least one foreign clone as a parent.

SRA has a post-entry quarantine facility at Indooroopilly that imports foreign clones each year.

The review will look for improvements to the import conditions so as to better manage biosecurity risks, as well as looking for opportunities (e.g. new pathogen testing techniques) that may reduce the time in quarantine.

SRA has already identified opportunities to accelerate the quarantine process for imported sugarcane clones without compromising management of the biosecurity risks.

GOVERNMENT COMPLIANCE PROGRAM ON CHEMICAL USE

CANEGROWERS recently met with Queensland Department of Agriculture officials to discuss the chemical use compliance program underway in the Plane Creek and Burdekin districts.

DAF acknowledges the work of growers within the Smartcane BMP program, and has agreed that accredited growers will be a low priority for compliance activity. DAF has also agreed to participate in district meetings with reps from CANEGROWERS and Productivity Services to discuss the roll-out of the program.

SUNSET REVIEW OF THE ACDC REGULATION

The ACDC Regulation, which sits under the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966, provides the framework for licensing of agricultural chemical application (aerial and ground distribution) in Queensland.

The Government intends to maintain this framework but is proposing some minor changes. One of these is the removal of AHCPMG301 (Control Weeds) as a competency training unit required for chemical application licences.

This would align Queensland with requirements in other jurisdictions and is part of a national harmonisation process for regulation of Agvet chemicals. ■



CANEGROWERS will appear before the Senate Committee to emphasise the failings of the Queensland Government's regulatory approach.





Burn Ashburner

Senior Manager - Industry
CANEGROWERS

Cost of Production Tool - more than the name implies

CANEGROWERS has developed a new Cost of Production Tool that, as the name suggests, enables members to calculate their costs of production. However, the tool does so much more. Most notably, it provides growers with a breakeven sugar price, which can really help when it comes to making better informed business decisions, especially around forward pricing.

Members are encouraged to download the Tool from the CANEGROWERS website and either use it themselves or engage their accountant to fill it out.

Firstly, the income parameters (tonnes of cane, hectares, CCS and sugar price) and costs need to be entered into the COP Tool spreadsheet.

The cost information can come from your latest profit and loss statement, your current budget, a separate tool like FEAT, or a combination of these.

Once completed, the Tool provides a summary of the farm budget with annual income and costs.

When analysed further, it allows much more insight into what drives the farm income, costs and profitability, with the information provided in an easy to understand way.

Although more complicated in practice, in general, cane farm costs are related to:

- Costs per tonne of cane e.g. harvesting and levies
- Costs per ha e.g. fertiliser, chemicals, irrigation
- Costs per farm e.g. accounting, insurance and rates

By changing the tonnes of cane and/or CCS and/or sugar price, the Tool will automatically change the income and those costs

(harvesting and levies) related to the tonnes of cane, and show the effect on profitability.

The same can be done by changing the input costs. For example, what if you reduce N applications and cost per ha, which in turn reduces tonnes of cane but increases CCS?

The Tool will reduce fertiliser costs based on hectares fertilised, decrease the harvesting and levies based on tonnes harvested, and change the income based on decreased tonnes cane but increased CCS.

Playing with these “what if” parameters will give you a better understanding of what certain decisions could mean for your business, without any of the risk of undertaking these actions.

Cashflow is always king, and the summary of income and costs in the COP Tool can show returns after deducting growing and overhead costs. This is a test of farming efficiency.

It can also calculate returns after deducting financial costs, which is a test of the debt structure.

And finally, the Tool can calculate your returns after capital costs and owners costs, which is a test of the business’ overall ability to cover all costs.

Members are again encouraged to download and use the COP Tool to better understand what sugar price is good for your business and play with some ‘what ifs’.

The COP Tool should not be confused with FEAT, which is an excellent tool for comparing detailed farm systems, particularly with regard to different machinery and mechanical operations. ■

Playing with these “what if” parameters will give you a better understanding of what certain decisions could mean for your business, without any of the risk of undertaking these actions.

Warren Males

Head - Economics
CANEGROWERS



Marketing Choice is delivering

The social and economic fabric of much of coastal Queensland revolves around the sugar industry. This is simply because sugarcane is well suited to the areas in which it is grown. Sugarcane is resilient. So too are cane growers.

As resilient as they are, cane growers are risk takers. The investment made in planting cane this year is an investment made for the next five or six years. This exposes growers to the risks of uncertain weather patterns and seasonal conditions. It also exposes them to the volatility of world sugar prices.

With Australia's world leading grower choice in marketing and pricing systems, now in their third year, growers are actively managing their price risk.

Responding to grower demands and strong competition amongst marketers to provide marketing services to growers, the range and sophistication of pricing options available to growers has expanded.

Many growers have taken the opportunity to make individual pricing decisions and are becoming increasingly confident in doing so. For example, different marketers report that earlier this year several growers took advantage of the strong sugar prices (closer to US15c/lb) seen in February to secure prices in the 2020 season production well in excess of AUD450 per tonne. Some growers have gone further, with orders already filled for good prices the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

These pricing decisions have reduced the exposure these growers have to the subsequent changes in the sugar price and value of the Australian dollar.

Recent experience shows that growers who understand their production cost profile, keep an eye on price opportunities and give themselves time to make pricing selections are finding that sugarcane production is a profitable business.

Making pricing decisions and taking advantage of pricing opportunities as they arise, growers are taking greater control of their financial affairs and are better able to manage their farm businesses. Marketers are responding to the competitive environment with innovative approaches to encourage grower participation and offering tailored products to meet demand.

Responding to grower demands for access to an independent and credible source of marketing information about key market drivers and the choices available, CANEGROWERS Marketing Information Service is designed to help growers navigate this new landscape. CANEGROWERS members can use their member number to access exclusive monthly video market updates and supporting documents online now. Visit: www.canegrowers.com.au/marketing-information-service

The cornerstone of price decision-making is a full understanding of exactly which costs the price needs to cover. The Cost of Production Tool, also available on the CANEGROWERS website, provides a means of calculating these costs and has proven very popular with members.

Sugar is not unique. Agricultural marketing and pricing services are also evolving in Australia's grains and cotton industries. It is interesting to note that these various pricing products offered are not regulated by ASIC or any other financial market oversight body. To reduce the need for government-imposed regulations covering the provision of marketing and pricing services, the grains industry has developed its own self-regulated approach. This includes a common approach to simple easy-to-understand pool descriptions and standardised processes and procedures to support transparency and competition. Some have suggested that it may be time for the Australian sugar industry to consider developing something similar. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Males'.

Growers who understand their production cost profile, keep an eye on price opportunities and give themselves time to make pricing selections are finding that sugarcane production is a profitable business.

Grower liability for acts of contractors

USE OF CONTRACTORS

It is quite common these days for some of the cane farming operations to be carried out by contractors engaged by the grower. I have recently been asked by a Burdekin grower to comment about the grower's exposure for liability for acts of the contractor.

LIABILITY FOR CONTRACTORS - GENERAL RULE AND EXCEPTIONS

The good news is that the general rule in law is that a grower is not liable for the acts of an independent contractor. The bad news is that there are always exceptions to the general rule.

One exception is that a grower may well still be liable if they exercise a substantial degree of control over how the contractor performs their services.

Also, if the contractor is doing what is specifically authorised and directed by the grower then that may result in the grower also assuming liability for actions of the contractor.

CONTRACTORS OR EMPLOYEES

The distinction between being regarded as a contractor or employee is very important. A contractor carries out their own business, whereas an employee carries out the employer's business.

If the person who causes the liability to arise was an employee, then under the usual employment laws, employers are liable for the acts, including



*By Chris Cooper,
CANEGROWERS
Legal Advisor*



negligent acts, of the employee which were committed in the course of or in connection with their employment.

In this way, the employers are said to be vicariously liable for the acts of the employee.

This liability can extend to all sorts of circumstances, not just negligence, and can include matters such as discrimination and sexual harassment.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

In an ever-increasing way, governments are expanding the net for liability for all sorts of incidents.

Directors are being held accountable for acts of the company. Business owners are being held accountable not just for acts of their employees but also their contractors.

Under the Work Health and Safety legislation, growers are regarded as persons who conduct a business and have responsibilities to provide a safe place and system of work.

This duty extends not just to employees but also to contractors and other persons who may visit the farm.

Under the National Heavy Vehicle laws, the chain of responsibility for transport safety has been extended to include the primary producer.

Growers do have a duty to reduce risks related to transport tasks, although generally this duty is imposed on things the grower can control.

Many other examples exist, including liability for causing environmental harm.

SUMMARY

A grower's responsibility for acts of contractors can be complex and the starting point of growers not being liable for the acts of contractors affords some protection but can be challenged in a variety of ways.

The particular facts and circumstances of each case will always need to be considered on their merits.

To finish on another general rule, try and engage experienced and appropriately qualified contractors AND always maintain comprehensive liability insurance.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

VIRTUALLY FACE-TO-FACE

If I've learnt one thing from my time with CANEGROWERS, it's that nothing beats a good old-fashioned face-to-face chat. Whether it's at a shed meeting, a grower meeting or just kicking the dirt on farm, face-to-face is best.

As you know, the pandemic has put a dampener on face-to-face meetings. Among other things, social distancing and travel restrictions have disrupted CANEGROWERS' plans for a series of regional member meetings.

These were meant to be social gatherings that provided an opportunity for CANEGROWERS Chairman **Paul Schembri** and CEO **Dan Galligan** to give members an update on industry issues and the work CANEGROWERS is undertaking on your behalf.

More importantly, it was to be an opportunity to listen to your ideas, talk about your issues and share a story or two.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 only allowed for one face-to-face meeting to take place, in Tully.

But if I have learnt another thing about growers, it's that you're a resilient and adaptable bunch. Undeterred, we switched from physical to virtual meetings and it wasn't long before we were talking with members, Directors and district managers over video conferencing.

Fun fact - the video phone was first introduced by AT&T at the 1964 World's Fair. So, it has only taken 56 years and a pandemic for the world to really embrace this technology.

MEMBER MEETINGS

During these virtual meetings Paul Schembri gave an update on industry issues and Dan Galligan outlined CANEGROWERS activities and outcomes. This was followed by a discussion on local issues.

These discussions have been engaging, informative and valuable. Common themes that emerged included:

- COVID-19, its impact and the work CANEGROWERS and the industry are doing to support the harvest and business continuity;
- World sugar price and WTO action against India;
- Reef regulations, reef science and updates on the Senate committee inquiry;
- Mill viability, mill ownership, diversification and land use change;

- The October Queensland Election;
- Competition and showing how CANEGROWERS is the best choice for growers; and
- Opportunities for more member benefits.

So far, we've held nine of these member meetings, with more scheduled with Tableland, Mackay and Proserpine before the end of July.

Feedback so far has been positive. The format is working and it provides the opportunity for timely engagement. Face-to-face meetings in the districts are still the preferred approach, however video meetings allow for agile and timely discussion and are virtually face-to-face.

COST OF PRODUCTION TOOL

Speaking of videos, have you checked out the video and how-to guide for the CANEGROWERS Cost of Production Tool? This short question and answer video was made to help you use this member-only product. Go to the Member Resources page of the CANEGROWERS website to see what the Cost of Production Tool can do for you.

QUEENSLAND COUNTRY HEALTH FUND

We're excited to announce the launch of a new membership benefit for CANEGROWERS members. We have recently partnered with Queensland Country Health Fund (QCHF) and developed the CANEGROWERS Corporate Health Plan, which is now available to all members and their families.

The QCHF CANEGROWERS Corporate Health Plan entitles members to a suite of retail health insurance products and a healthy discount on their annual premium. The Corporate Health Plan provides coverage anywhere in Australia, a choice of health service provider and easy claiming through QCHF's Mobile App or Online Member Services portal.

QCHF is the only regionally-based Queensland health fund. It has a head office in Townsville and five retail service centres in Townsville, Ayr, Mackay, Cairns and Mount Isa.

A link to QCHF is on page 2 and the Member Resources page on the CANEGROWERS website. ■



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

FIRST 5 LINES FREE* FOR CANEGROWERS MEMBERS!

Book online anytime of the day or night at www.canegrowers.com.au or email us at ads@CANEGROWERS.com.au

Next deadline is **23 July 2020**.

* 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, such as farm machinery, etc. Advertisements from non-members are charged at \$11 per line incl GST. Only prepaid ads will be accepted.

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1997 CASE Track Harvester
Komatsu 325 HP engine 6,000 hrs.
15" x 8 blade, raised cab with tilt kit,
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Rubber belt cane feed
2.5 tonne capacity
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Toft 6500 Track Frames
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Enquire NOW!

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www.gtmachinerysales.com.au

Mossman-Tully

2 of John Deere 7810 Articulated with 14
tonne Carta bins, very good condition for age.
Ph: 0408713854.

7ft Slasher, dual rubber wheels, heavy duty,
very good condition, new PTO shaft, 110 HP
gear box, \$5,500 incl. GST. Ph: 0408770054.
90" Howard Rotary Hoe. Converted into 2
Row Bed Forming Zonal Hoe. Chain Drive
with new oil & blades. \$7,500 incl. GST. Ph:
0488988136.

2590 Case Tractor low hours. 4080
Chamberlain JD. 4040 JD suitable for hi-
rise Conversion. 1000 Fiat. Michigan 14
yard elevating scraper and parts. 8340
New Holland coupled to 10t Side Tipper
BSM. Plant cutter. 2 fan blower. Silvan Fert
Spreader. Spicer Axel hubs and rims. Ph:
0407160673.

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

JD7400 122hp A/C 4WD High clear tyres
\$16,000. MSW Side dresser 3T s/s Fert Bin
\$6,000. MF178 Front end loader \$7,000.
Fiat 514R High clearance tractor \$5,500. All
+ GST. Ph: 0408456218.

1x Massey Ferguson 6475 6t side tipping
haulout tractor. Also 1x 6t side tipper
available. Low hrs. VGC. Ph: 0740562063.

Herbert River-Burdekin

Telescopic ram for 14t Carta Tipper done up
\$3000, Telescopic ram for 14t Carta Tipper
\$500, 14t 2nd hand good condition elevator
chain and flights, New 30 inch rim for JCB
Fastrac, Bonfiglioli hub done up \$3000, 2010
John Deere 3520 Track Harvester excellent
condition. All + GST. Ph: 0417077343.
Fiat F120 tractor plus 12 ton Tully Tipper
\$35,000 + GST. Ph: 0400730328.

Mackay-Proserpine

10T Cane Side Tippers x 4 (2 on trailers),
Track Cane Harvester Case 2016 (Multiplier
Attached), Iveco Trakker 6x6 Truck. All
good condition. Prices by negotiation. Ph:
0408755453 or 0438755459.

Trash incorporator; double row marker with
hydraulic ram; double row fertiliser box;
stick planter with tank & suson box; 3-row
trash rakes; 3-row multi-weeder; cutaways;
rippers; disc offsets; grubbers for ratoon
and fallow; slasher; cane break pushers;
3-row stool splitter with gal fertilizer box &
more. Ph: 0417612883.

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

JOHNNY FARMING COMPANY

New Hydraulic Heavy Duty

OFFSETS

3 metre width, 28 discs,
All bath bearings
\$12,000 plus GST (\$13,200 incl GST) Other
size offsets available are 1.8m, 2.2m, 2.5m,
3m & 3.4metres.
3 point linkage offsets available also



New Heavy Duty SLASHERS

2.1 metres width \$3,300 incl GST
Other sizes available are 1.2m, 1.5m & 1.8m

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Phone (07) 4952 2577 or 0412 535 887 (John)
or 0407 638 674 (Andrew)
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SELL. Several qualified
buyers waiting.

More listings needed.

Steve Rossi
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steve@cairnssouth.com.au

Professionals
Cairns South

Classifieds

PRIME MOVER: 1995 Mack CHR 788RS 6x4, PTO hydraulics, spring suspension, sleeper cab, 18 sp Mack gear box, ball race turn table, UHF radio, GVM 25510kg/GCM 45000kg \$15,000+GST. FORD LOUISVILLE LN8000 Water Truck, 1981, tandem, Truck is unregistrable, rusted cab but good running Cat 3208 turbo engine, Eaton Fuller RT6613 transmission, 10,000 ltr tank with 5 HP Honda motor 3" water pump \$2,800. Ph: 0419700761.

2500 Cameco full track cane harvester 1995/96 excellent condition. MF 1085 good condition. Poplin billet planter excellent condition. Rinaudo 3t stainless steel Fertilizer box side dresser. Howard 3 leg square plough. Ph: 0488053298.

Graham Plow Yeomans Chisel plough 3350 wide or 11' 2230 deep or 7'6", 11 legs (+4 spare legs) with leaf harrows \$3,850. Ph: 49595883 or 0407643441.

Westhill plant cutter with toppler \$2,000 incl. GST. Ph: 0409264351.

Toft 6000 wheel harvester GC \$9,000. Double bin 2.5t side tip trailer for planting. Has own pto pump & control valves \$4,500. Single 2.5t rear tip plant tipping trailer \$1,200 ONO. Moller billet planter wide shute dual chain feed with side chemical tanks. Does really nice job with the results that can be viewed on farm \$18,000. All + GST. Koumala. Ph: 0428611714.

Hard hose irrigator, 400/450m length or space on the reel to extend the poly to 400/450m. Ph: 0490029387.

1995 Austoft Cane harvester \$40K; Bonel Billet Planter \$9K; Westhill Trash Extractor \$200; Westhill 1t Fert bin \$300; Hodge 4 furrow disc reversible plough \$1K; Cummins 6 Cyl head-new in box \$500; BHC Duster \$100; Montabert 750 Rockbreaker \$4.5K; Montabert 125 Rockbreaker \$2.4K. All + GST. Ph: 0418185663.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Extra Heavy Duty Carryall, 1800mm W x 800mm D x 850mm H, Frame 100mm x 50mm box with 5mm floor, Main Uprights 100mm x 100mm box, quick hitch set up, \$1,500. Ph: 0428236165.

Bundaberg-Rocky Point

37 Kw totally enclosed electric motor direct coupled to 2 1/2" RHD Southern Cross pump on frame for high pressure water winch \$1000 + GST. Ph: 0429188936.

6 row single disc opener vacuum planter, JD planting boxes, plates to suit soybean, Inoculation tanks fitted 2x 220L tanks, VGC, \$22000 incl. GST. Ph: 0409632656.

New Holland 7040 tractor \$65,000. Case 8910 Haulout tractor with double 6t BSM bin, fair condition \$75,000. All + GST. Isis area. Ph: 0429915351.

Old grey bonel 3 furrow disc plow. Criton Mark 2 Harvester with 135 Massey

Rainfall Report

Brought to you by Sunsuper

Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)			Average rainfall (mm)
	Month prior (May 2020)	Month to date (1 Jun-24 Jun)	Year to date	Jan-Jun
Whyanbeel Valley (Mossman)	175.6	33.8	1,444	2,229
Mareeba Airport	39.2	4.2	465	656
Cairns Aero	151.4	37.4	1,129	1,589
Mt Sophia	359	104	1,778	2,582
Babinda Post Office	551.8	149.6	2,231	3,257
Innisfail	452.8	205.1	2,296	2,700
Tully Sugar Mill	599.6	198.6	2,365	3,134
Cardwell Marine Pde	225.7	18.4	1,342	1,651
Lucinda Township	283.5	63.5	1,596	1,662
Ingham Composite	219.8	23.9	1,553	1,611
Abergowrie Alert	48	5	569	1,095
Townsville Aero	77.4	17.2	759	885
Ayr DPI Research Stn	60.6	1	958	721
Proserpine Airport	92	10	695	1,088
Mirani Mary Street	82	19.8	891	1,095
Mackay MO	123.4	53.8	1,076	1,185
Plane Creek Sugar Mill	0	0	1,012	1,301
Bundaberg Aero	14.8	26.6	421	610
Childers South	3.6	33.6	351	513
Maryborough	36	33.8	572	722
Tewantin RSL Park	87.4	97.4	1,090	1,004
Eumundi - Crescent Rd	51.1	69.2	1,080	1,104
Nambour Daff - Hillside	52.8	46.4	1,113	1,169
Logan City Water Treatment Plant	21.4	50.7	784	673
Murwillumbah Bray Park	48.8	96.4	1,245	1,034
Ballina Airport	230.8	79.8	1,329	1,128
New Italy (Woodburn)	103.8	65.8	1,124	857



sunsuper

dream with
your eyes open

Zero indicates either no rain or no report was sent. These rainfall figures are subject to verification and may be updated later. Weather forecasts, radar and satellite images and other information for the farming community can be accessed on www.bom.gov.au. Weather report sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology Recent Rainfall Tables.

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

Wanted

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

Tractor tyres: 11x28inch, 12x28inch, 13x28inch; in sound condition. Mackay area. Ph: 49595207.

Kubota inter row tractor for spraying cane. Must be 4WD. Tanks not needed. Bundaberg area. Ph Neil: 0411343970.

Positions Vacant

Harvester Contractor for 2020 Season to cut approx. 2,500 tonnes in the Herbert River District. Ph: Pauline Biasi: 0747762242.

Property

Pleystowe cane farm. On 2 Lots. Approx 190 acres all up. Teemburra water, 2 pumps & licences, plus 32,000 gallons an hour

underground bore. Machinery/irrigation shed. 2x 4" soft hose irrigators, farm lasered, underground main throughout. 2 sidings adjoin farms. Access to farm from Pleystowe School Rd & Formosa's Rd. Does not include 2019 crop. Selling due to health reasons. Ph: 0408733793.

Cane farm Tarakan Road ABERGOWRIE 270 acres freehold Genuine enquiries pls. Ph: 0747774633 or 0408608664.

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

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Buyers please be aware of scam emails when buying online. Scammers may try to intercept emails between genuine buyers and sellers by sending the buyer a fake invoice with different account details for the payment. Buyers should check with the seller by phone for accurate account details before making payment.

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