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CANE AUSTRALIAN GROWER

DECEMBER 2022 - VOL 44 / NO. 12

FEATURES

04 **Lightning strike**

Mossman Mill out of action for three days following unseasonal thunderstorm.

05 **WTO Fix**

Global Sugar Alliance calls for fully restored and functioning WTO dispute settlement system to ensure fair marketplace for global sugar industry.

12 **Iconic croc rehomed**

A 4m croc has finally been removed from a Tableland cane farm after avoiding capture for three months.

24 **Doubling Down**

After a season trialling Australia's first-ever John Deere dual row harvester, Tully grower Chris Condon is sold on the green machine.



COVER IMAGE: Tully grower Chris Condon is the proud owner of Australia's first-ever John Deere dual row harvester. Read more on page 24. Photo by Renee Cluff.

CONTENTS IMAGE: Fears of an explosion in rat numbers due to the unprecedented amount of standover cane. Read more on page 32.

EVERY ISSUE

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



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Lightning strike cuts power to mill

An early season thunderstorm robbed Queensland's most far northern harvest of precious crushing days, leading to losses of harvested sugar cane.

An unseasonal heatwave in late October delivered afternoon storms with accompanying lightning, with one strike cutting the turbine power at Far Northern Milling's Mossman mill.

As the grower-owned mill's leaders scrambled to get the rollers moving again, three days of crushing were lost along with a large number of bins of cane that eventually went stale.

Far Northern Milling Chairperson **Maryann Salvetti** described it as a freak storm.

"They weren't really predicting much of a thunderstorm, it wasn't something we were expecting at all," she said.

"It hit right on one of the big electrical poles that services our river pumps and it travelled up the line and blew our six-megawatt generator.

"We thought it was just the river pumps that got hit so repairs were undertaken but when staff went to start up the genset they realised it was badly damaged.

"We had many bins that ended up being stale."

A technical team was brought up from Brisbane to inspect the mill's spare three megawatt generator and with the assistance of two extra generators, the mill resumed crushing.

The costly, temporary fix remains in place with the blown-up generator expected to take months to repair.

"It's very costly to do what we're doing because we are using diesel and at \$2.30 a litre it's very expensive," Ms Salvetti said.

"But we managed to get the mill going."

The lightning strike followed a delayed start because of a late wet season as well as truck transport labour challenges and the loss of a turbine.

Ms Salvetti said this year's crush has been entirely run on one boiler, which is half the usual capacity.

"One of our big turbines that we got fixed last year, it blew the housing when we started it up," she explained.



"It has been an extremely trying season but all stakeholders are determined to get all the crop crushed.

"The Board and I have the most resilient GM and management and people working at that mill.

"I'm one of the most blessed chairpersons in the industry – they work day and night, they get in there and do it and they've got the love for the mill."

Mossman's challenging season is scheduled to wind up mid-December. ■

Pictured: Mossman mill was out of action for three days after a lightning strike damaged a generator.

Harvest tragedy in far north Queensland

The Innisfail cane growing district is mourning the tragic death of one of its own.

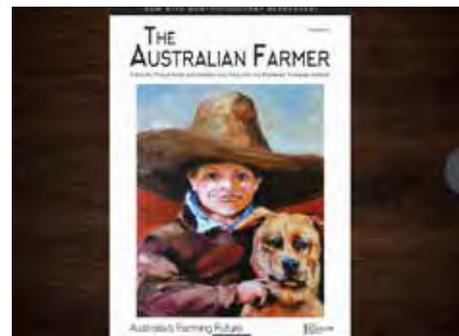
Qhaleb Quinn, 21, of Silkwood was working as a haulout operator when his tractor overturned on a public road at Mundoo on the morning of November 21. He suffered critical injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene.

The tragedy occurred with just a week of the harvest season remaining.

"The Innisfail cane growing district and the wider community are mourning the loss of this young man so close to the end of the harvest season," CANEGROWERS Innisfail Chairman **Joe Marano** said.

"We are deeply saddened by his death and our condolences go out to his family and loved ones. CANEGROWERS Innisfail is providing support to all who have been impacted by this tragedy."

Queensland Police are investigating the incident. ■



The Australian Farmer

The latest edition of *The Australian Farmer* is online now. The digital magazine is regularly updated and focuses on agricultural science, technology, innovation, productivity, profitability, and ESG. Women in agriculture and Indigenous are key themes running through the e-book too, check it out www.theaustralianfarmer.com/digital-book. ■



Fixing the WTO – key to sustainable sugar future

Global Sugar Alliance members called on India to fully comply with its international commitments and urged all countries to redouble efforts to fix the World Trade Organization (WTO), during a meeting in London last month.

Earlier this year, a WTO Panel ruled in favour of Australia, Brazil and Guatemala's joint action against India's marketing-distorting sugar subsidies and domestic price supports.

India has appealed the ruling, however the absence of a WTO appellate body has left the case in limbo.

The Alliance established three priorities that it said are vital to ensuring a fair trading system for the global sugar industry.

- India complying with its WTO commitments
- Restoring a fully and well-functioning WTO dispute settlement system and appellate body
- Strengthening the WTO's rules-based global trading system with countries committed to ambitious reductions in trade - and production-distorting domestic supports, and increasing trade liberalism – not retreating into protectionism.

"The WTO Panel ruling that the fundamentally flawed Indian sugar regime breaches India's international commitments is an emphatic win for the world sugar industry," GSA Chairman Mr Beashel said.

"To promote predictability and security in the multilateral trading system, restoration of the WTO Appellate Body is a matter of priority and urgency."

The annual World Association of Beet and Cane Growers conference was also held in London last month.

CANEGROWERS previous and current chairmen **Paul Schembri** and **Owen Menkens** attended the conference, where the rising cost of inputs and industry diversification were top of the agenda. ■

Pictured: Paul Schembri and Owen Menkens attended the WABCG conference.



AUSTRALIA READY TO LEAD WORLD IN SUSTAINABLE SUGAR EXPORTS

Australia pioneered a new era of sustainable sugar exports when the first-ever shipment of fully traceable, sustainably produced raw sugar was loaded for export at the Port of Townsville in November.

In a world first, the sugar, produced from cane grown by Smartcane BMP accredited growers, will be traceable through the supply chain to the end user in South Korea.

The proof-of-concept trial is the culmination of years of work by CANEGROWERS and KPMG Origins, working with a range of supply chain partners to create a platform that would use blockchain technology to trace the provenance of sugar from paddock to package.

The KPMG Origins blockchain technology has already been tested in Tully and Mackay to show traceability of Smartcane BMP accredited sugarcane from farm to mill.

This export pilot is testing traceability from the bulk sugar terminal to the customer and will involve a 25,000-tonne shipment of sugar sold by Queensland Sugar Limited (QSL), through sugar trader Czarnikow, and delivered to the buyer in South Korea.

“There has been a huge growth in consumer demand for sustainable products across all sectors of the economy, and sugar is no different,” CANEGROWERS Chairman Owen Menkens said.

“While proving sustainability can be difficult, through the hard work of growers across the state we have a head start in this area.

“Over many years, CANEGROWERS has been implementing the industry-led best management practice program, Smartcane BMP, and today almost 40% of Queensland’s cane land is accredited in the program.

“In addition to this, Smartcane BMP has itself been recognised by global sugar sustainability programs, Bonsucro, Czarnikow VIVE, and ProTerra as aligning with their respective sugar sustainability frameworks.

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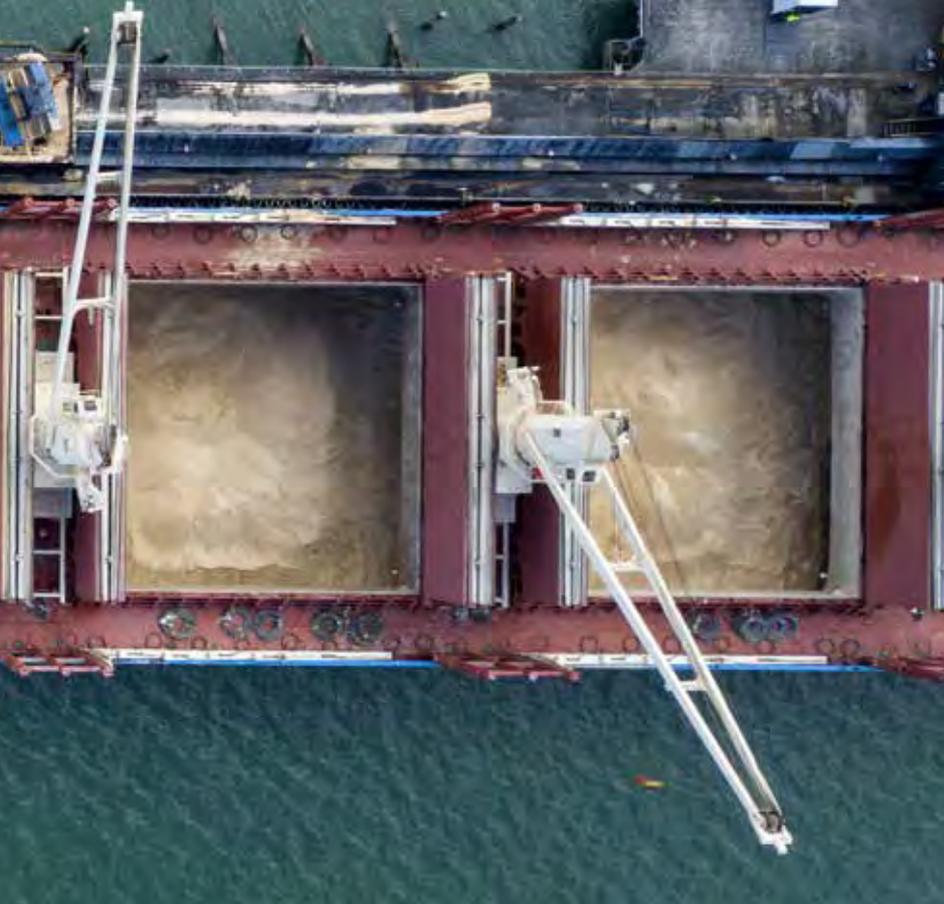
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"There has been a huge growth in consumer demand for sustainable products across all sectors of the economy ... through the hard work of growers across the state we have a head start in this area."

"This means sugar produced from cane grown by Smartcane BMP accredited growers is now getting international recognition for its sustainability."

Mr Menkens said the driving force behind the project was a desire to keep Australia's sugar industry at the cutting edge of innovation, while also developing a system that could improve market access for Australian sugar, as well as claim a possible premium for growers.

"Growers continue to innovate and improve farming practices to build both environmental sustainability and improve productivity," Mr Menkens said.

"Often these efforts have gone unrecognised by both markets and government. But as demand increases for certified, traceable, sustainable sugar, growers will need to see these efforts rewarded."

Laszlo Peter, the lead partner from KPMG Origins, said "we're proud to be the technology platform demonstrating sustainable practices in supply chains, enabling standardised data controls,

permissions and incentives via an ecosystem connected to trade partners"

QSL General Manager Marketing Mark Hampson said the pilot shipment was an important first step into an evolving market.

"As is the case with countless other products, changing consumer sentiment is not only driving the demand for ethically produced, sustainable sugar, but making it a key pillar of market access," Mr Hampson said.

"Initiatives such as these are essential to ensure we not only meet that demand, but keep Queensland sugar the product of choice in high-paying markets."

Smartcane BMP and the blockchain traceability projects have been delivered with the assistance and partnership of the State and Federal governments. ■

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CELEBRATING AGRICULTURE

National Agriculture Day is a chance to celebrate and learn about Australia's incredible farm sector. Held on the third Friday of November each year, it's a day to celebrate industries that are a part of Australian family life every single day.

CANEGROWERS hosted a stakeholder function to celebrate innovation in the sugar industry on Friday 18 November.

Senator Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management, came along and was suitably impressed with the many initiatives happening within the industry.

The event was a great opportunity to speak about the Sugar Plus roadmap and opportunities it presents with key personnel from government departments and other associated organisations.

"CANEGROWERS, as a proud member of the NFF, joined with our industry colleagues from across the country to host events to help share the story of innovation in agriculture with our communities," CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan said.

"We do so to celebrate a sector that is part of all of our lives, every single day, and to promote the opportunities and value that agriculture presents to the community.

"AgDay is a demonstration of industry organisations working together to promote all of agriculture, regardless of sector interests. Australian farmers are globally recognised as being leaders in innovation, particularly when it comes to farming practices and sustainability, and this is a story we must share with the wider community," Mr Galligan said. ■



Pictured top left: Stephen Ryan General Manager ACFA with Dougall Lodge Director Supply & Agri Solutions. Top right: Senator The Hon Murray Watt Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry Minister for Emergency Management, CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan and Ros Baker CEO SRA. Bottom left: Burn Ashburner CANEGROWERS, Julian Roberts, Russ Mehmet and Claire Wilkinson, Willis Towers Watson and Bec Tkai from QFF. Bottom right: Richard Shannon NFF Horticulture Council Executive Manager, Sharon McIntosh QFF Policy Advisor, Water & Energy and Chris Gillitt CANEGROWERS.

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CEO COMMENT

By Dan Galligan, CEO CANEGROWERS

AS THE SEASON ENDS, WE LOOK AT A NEW BEGINNING

What started five years ago with a simple idea and one or two events in Canberra has grown to become a truly national celebration of agriculture.

Set aside for the third Friday of November, National AgDay is largely led by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) with the aim of celebrating agriculture and promoting our great industry to the community.

CANEGROWERS, as a proud member of the NFF, has joined with our industry colleagues from across the country to host events to help share the story of innovation in agriculture with our communities.

We do so to celebrate a sector that is part of all of our lives, every single day, and to promote the opportunities and value that agriculture presents to the community.

On AgDay this year, CANEGROWERS members and staff participated in and led many events.

These included a business breakfast organised and hosted by Queensland Farmers' Federation in Brisbane and attended by over 150 leaders, including Federal Minister for Agriculture the Hon Murray Watt.

At the end of the day QCGO hosted a function with industry stakeholders, including researchers and policy makers, to again connect and discuss the state of the industry and reflect on the growth and innovation in our industry.

Meanwhile NFF and other industry organisations held events in Canberra, Sydney and even Perth.

AgDay is a demonstration of industry organisations working together to promote all of agriculture, regardless of sector interests. Australian farmers are globally recognised as being leaders in innovation, particularly when it comes to farming practices and sustainability.

Just like our members, our industry is constantly adapting. This approach was most recently seen

in the work on the Sugar Plus roadmap, which proposed a new, complementary bio-economy supply chain for the industry.

The roadmap is important. It is not a recipe and it is not going to change the nature of farming immediately.

Instead, the roadmap proposes an evolution for the industry, outlining how, with the support of positive government policy and new investment in the industry, we can build supply chain to sit alongside sugar production.

CANEGROWERS is determined to lead a discussion that can build a supply chain that sees growers contributing to the global need for sustainable energy and resources. Whether it be using cane fibre for biodegradable food containers or the huge demand for sustainable aviation fuel.

The work that growers have done over the past decade to demonstrate sustainable practices through Smartcane BMP is now positioning them to be part of emerging industries that sit side by side with our highly successful and in demand sugar production.

Last month, CANEGROWERS worked with QSL and sugar trader Czarnikow to send our first pilot shipment of sugar using blockchain technology to a customer in South Korea. The shipment was fully traceable and certified as sustainably produced.

This trial was underpinned by the efforts of farmers adopting Smartcane BMP and being willing to participate in the trial.

Like BMP, the blockchain project has been grower-led but delivered in partnership with experts within the supply chain, service providers and state and federal governments.

It will continue to be important for such innovations to be led by growers but supported by good policy leadership from government.

The Sugar Plus roadmap provides the forum for these discussions. The outcome for growers must be improved profitability and that is why CANEGROWERS knows we must be heavily involved.

So, as we slowly draw to the end of a long harvest season, we will spend some valuable time reflecting of the year gone.

Equally we hope growers know that, at CANEGROWERS, while we are here to help with the pressures of the current seasons, there is also an enormous amount of work being done towards planning for a positive future for all within the industry. ■





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Workplace hazard

By Renee Cluff

After months of eluding capture, a huge estuarine crocodile has now been removed from an irrigation dam at a far north Queensland cane farm.

Cane growers Harry and Sandra Phillott first spotted 'Ted' the croc in August.

The 4.2-metre reptile had taken up residence in an irrigation dam at their farm in Bibhoora, west of Cairns.

It's in the Tablelands cane growing district, which is not traditionally known for salties.

"He was magnificent to watch," Harry said. "He'd show himself off and he was quite active. It was like having a big battleship in your dam."

However, Ted also posed a major safety concern, particularly when it came to working with pumps.

"It makes it hard to clean the foot valve, it keeps you on your toes," Harry said.

"You've just got to be aware of it. I now pull the whole pipeline out and do what I have to do up on the bank."

The Phillotts immediately reported the reptile to the Queensland Department of Environment and Science, which targeted it for removal.

Over the next three months, wildlife officers tried several tactics and in mid-November, had the croc in their custody.

"They were trying to trap him and they were trying to snare him, all sorts of different techniques" Harry said. "Eventually it worked for them."

Bibhoora is classed as an atypical habitat zone under the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan, and all crocodiles within that zone are targeted for removal from the wild.

While the habitat for Ted was ideal with plenty of turtles, barramundi and birdlife to feed on, the area is not traditional saltie territory, being 60 kilometres inland and 400 metres above sea level.

Even so, recent surveys commissioned by the Mareeba Shire Council have shown there's a population of around 40 reptiles, including up to four large crocs greater than four metres in length.

The most popular theory is that several reptiles escaped from a nearby crocodile farm during a flood event many years ago.

Another is they have moved east from the Gulf of Carpentaria, some 700 kilometres away.

It's certainly not the first time the Phillotts have had a problem croc.

In 2017, a harvesting contractor at their property was bitten on his hand by a much smaller 1.4-metre reptile. The crocodile had been badly burned during a cane fire.

"They tried to move it and it lashed out," Harry said. "It's an ongoing issue. There are plenty of big fellas and every time we get a flood they move around."



"He'd show himself off and he was quite active. It was like having a big battleship in your dam."

Ted is among those big fellas, estimated to be at least 40 years old.

Because he's greater than four metres long, he must be dealt with as an 'iconic crocodile' under Queensland's conservation laws.

That means he'll be placed with a registered crocodile farm or zoo which agrees to use him to educate the public about croc conservation and ecology.

A decision on where he will be housed must also be made in consultation with Traditional Owners. ■

Picture: Tableland growers Sandra and Harry Phillott had to be extra careful working near the dam while Ted was around.



Agricultural lime, the natural solution

For decades, farmers have been spreading agricultural lime all over their soils. This has been a proven technique as many have seen great returns in crop yield by doing so every year.

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FROM THE CHAIR

By Owen Menkens, Chairman CANEGROWERS

SHARED CHALLENGES

Often when we face challenging times, we tend to feel like we're the only ones doing it tough. This can be true not just of individuals, but at an industry level too.

The 2022 season has been a particularly challenging one for individual sugarcane growers and for the industry as a whole.

While the season started off promisingly, with plenty of optimism around the high world sugar price, there has been growing frustration over poor weather impacting harvesting operations and poor mill performance extending the season length.

There has also been a lot of anxiety among growers about sky-rocketing input costs, especially fuel and fertiliser.

In fact, there have even been murmurs that price gouging at the local level may be responsible for the rising costs.

However, a recent trip to London for the 2022 World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) conference brought home to me the fact that this is far from a localised problem and Australia is not alone in facing these challenges.

Around the world, farmers are facing the same concerns about rising input costs and what it means for their production and bottom line.

While these price rises are beyond the control of any one industry or nation, it is comforting to know that we are all in the same boat and that Australian growers are not being unfairly disadvantaged.

Like Australia, other sugar producing nations are also examining ways to diversify their sugar industries.

WABCG members had a unified position on how sugarcane and beet can, through diversification, be part of a solution to climate change.

We are in a unique position through the production of ethanol, electricity and biogas to reduce the overall carbon output of the world.

More needs to be invested in these areas, as well as in the development of aviation fuel and bioplastics, but for this we need positive government policy settings at state and federal levels.

While in London I also attended a meeting of the Global Sugar Alliance, where members called on India to fully comply with its international trade commitments and stop dumping price-distorting subsidised sugar onto the market.

Maintaining a high world sugar price is the best way to ensure our growers and the communities they support can absorb rising input costs and remain viable. We can only do this if India stops unfairly distorting the world market.

The Global Sugar Alliance also acknowledged the big push from consumers for sustainable products, including sugar.

Thankfully, through the hard work of growers over the past decade, the Australian industry is well advanced in this regard.

Through our grower-led best management practice program, Smartcane BMP, and more recently our Blockchain Sustainable Sugar Project, we are well on the way to positioning Australia as the world's premier sustainable sugar nation.

There is more work to be done, but CANEGROWERS is working hard with our members and industry partners to ensure we have a bright future for the industry and regional Queensland communities. ■

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CHRISTMAS CRUSH

Race to get crop off continues

By Robyn Devine and Kirili Lamb

Growers supplying the Mulgrave Mill became the first to cut out this season, ending their harvest with a sigh of relief on 17 November. Unfortunately, for growers further south the news isn't so sweet, with the end of this year's crush still many weeks away.

Despite getting off to an optimistic start, the 2022 has been a challenging season for Queensland's sugarcane growers.

While the world sugar price has remained high, providing a positive story for the industry, challenges with wet weather, workforce shortages, and poor mill performance have plagued the season and left growers feeling frustrated and anxious.

Widespread rain events in June left paddocks soggy and inaccessible.

It was a double-whammy for growers, with the unseasonable wet weather not only delaying the crush across a number of districts, but also boosting the size of the crop, leaving more cane to cut in a shorter window.

This effectively ensures a late finish in many areas, however the problem has been compounded by ongoing mill performance issues with some districts now staring down the barrel of a mid-January finish.

PROSERPINE

Wet weather played its part in disrupting Proserpine's crush, with 450 hours or 19 days officially lost due to rain so far this season. This comes on top of a late start to the crush due to a disrupted maintenance program caused mainly by supply chain issues relating to critical capital expenditure projects.

Retro-fitting of a new mud filter caused considerable delays at the start and the loss of experienced permanent staff during the maintenance season was another challenge, along with difficulties recruiting casual labour for the commencement of the crushing season.

As at the end of Week 21, the mill was 400,000 tonnes behind budget, which equates to approximately five weeks crushing, therefore, lost time is split 50/50 between wet weather and mechanical issues.

On the positive side, CANEGROWERS Proserpine District Manager **Mike Porter** says communication with the mill has improved greatly during the season with regular updates provided by senior milling executives and superintendents.

PLANE CREEK

In both Plane Creek and Mackay milling districts the harvest got away to a delayed start over mid-June and that delay set a pattern for the remainder of the crush.

For Plane Creek, wet weather further held off a start, while mechanical issues gave Mackay Sugar's three mills at Farleigh, Marian, Racecourse a rough leading edge into the crush.

Concerns about the impact of a late finish to the 2021 harvest on Mackay Sugar's maintenance schedule the slack had been expressed by CANEGROWERS Mackay towards the end of 2021.

These concerns were borne out by Marian Mill's unreadiness to commence operations, finally leading out on one train only and technical issues at the mills.

Unseasonal rain events in May and July created some issues around cane supply in both milling districts. July's event delivered over 170mm in some areas, causing stoppages of between seven and 14 days.



"We are now at 70 percent, but we should be at 85 to 90 percent. And that is all due to substandard factory performance and a late start to the crush."

The rain may have halted production, but it also brought on a significant boost of around 100,000 to 200,000 tonnes to crop estimates for the year, meaning that the goal posts significantly shifted as to when the mills would call end-of crush. Currently, it is expected that mills will finish in early to mid-January, dependent on cane quality and the onset of the Wet.

CANEGROWERS Mackay Chairman **Kevin Borg** (*pictured*), a Plane Creek area grower, said the mill had performed better so far this season compared to past years.

"An availability figure in excess of 85% has been achieved to date, making this a better year for performance than in many past years," Mr Borg said.

"We are crushing into early January as a result of a large crop that has been grown on the back of a reasonable wet season

as well as intermittent rain through the crush period. To date estimates continue to increase quite substantially.

"A lower than usual sugar content has aided Plane Creek Mill in their efforts to crush the crop. In past years, high CCS levels have impacted crushing rates as a result of low capacity in the backend of the milling process."

Wilmar's Sarina Regional Operations Manager **Pieter Van Vuren** agreed that wet weather had caused significant delays for Plane Creek Mill.

"As at 11 November, more than three weeks of crushing time had been lost to wet weather since the start of the season," Mr Van Vuren said.

"The mill has performed well over the season to date with consistent throughput week to week. The main challenges have been from wet weather and labour shortages.

"We've placed a strong focus on maximising crush rate and prioritising targeted maintenance during cane supply stops, in order to keep availability up. Mill reliability has been good, with season-to-date availability currently 86.3 per cent."

Mr Van Vuren said the milling district's crop continued to cut above the estimate. Initial estimates were at 1.3Mt but have been adjusted incrementally over the season to 1.5 then 1.6Mt. The miller expects that based on throughputs to mid-November, the Plane Creek season would finish in the first week of January

"The extended crushing season will mean a condensed maintenance period. There

continues next page ►





is a full maintenance program planned for next year's crush so it is imperative the work is completed in time for a good start in 2023," said Mr Van Vuren.

MACKAY

Mackay Sugar's three mills, at Farleigh, Racecourse and Marian have had a chequered harvest season, with Farleigh Mill in particular experiencing numerous shutdown periods, as the mill has grappled with recurring issues with Boiler No 4.

After a disrupted start to crushing, the mill experienced leak issues in Boiler No 4. A 72 hr shutdown was called for mid-August, only to be repeated six weeks later with breakdowns and stop-start milling from 6 October before a 60 hr steam off maintenance stop from 17 October to address the boiler issues, along with repairs to the bagasse system and multiple process pipe leaks. The issues did not resolve as quickly as hoped, with operations not re-commencing until 21 October. A further 48 hr shutdown was called from 1 November to address the boiler economiser.

Concurrently, Racecourse was shutdown for 90 hours to undertake critical repairs. At the time of writing the litany of anguish for growers supplying to Farleigh was set to add a new chapter, with the offending boiler experiencing a critical tube leak requiring internal scaffold and weld repairs, and what looked to be another 48 hr shutdown.

Mackay Sugar indicated that as of 16 November 2022, it had crushed more than 70% of the estimated 5.67Mt crop for the season, with an average crush rate of 533t/hr across the three mills, but declined to respond to more specific questions around mill performance and the impact a long season may have on its maintenance period.

Joseph Borg is CANEGROWERS Mackay Deputy Chairman, and a grower in the

Mackay milling district. When it comes to milling performance in the 2022 season, he does not mince his words, de-crying a season extending to January 13, with the expectation of large quantities of standover and potentially two months of harvesting cane with low CCS and purity.

"We are now at 70 percent, but we should be at 85 to 90 percent. And that is all due to substandard factory performance and a late start to the crush," Mr Borg said.

"Granted there were issues out of their control in the maintenance period, such as lack of workforce, COVID, access to parts, but the mill performance this year has been terrible, abysmal."

Mr Borg is concerned for the economic and personal wellbeing of growers who may have significant standover, and the financial risk of cutting – if the monsoon does not set in as expected- two months beyond the point of dwindling CCS. With no coverage for below 7CCS in the Mackay milling district, it's a perilous situation for growers.

"Grower morale is the worst I have seen, I have never seen it so low. There is a good sugar price, we have a good crop, and we aren't going to see the benefit of that," Mr Borg said.

"Mackay Sugar has committed to crush all the cane crop sent to them but has not committed to pay for it: for the cane that is under 75 percent purity, under 7 CCS. That is below industry standard, it is not what other millers do.

"I have heard from some growers that some varieties are already getting 9's. With more storms forecast, things may get unpleasantly interesting"

CANEGROWERS Mackay has written to Mackay Sugar CEO **Jannik Olejas** requesting reconsideration of remuneration for below 7 CCS and under 75 percent purity cane, but this was rejected.

A run through the different districts paints a diverse picture, just as farms vary from field to field, the 2022 crush has differed for growers throughout the regions. For some it's been the best one yet while for others it's been outstanding in a negative and frustrating way.

Growers recognise and acknowledge the challenges impacting mill operations things like labour shortages and delays accessing specialised equipment to assist the mill's reliability but indicate that the importance of strong communication was often overlooked in many districts.

The crush-to-date for the growers in the Rocky Point district is 12.40% after four weeks of harvest while the same time last year it was 65.15% at week 17.

CANEGROWERS Rocky Point Chairman **Greg Zipf** told *Australian Canegrower* (October 2022) that growers were frustrated with limited communication from the Rocky Point Mill, and it affected the growers' confidence in the mill's reliability.

"We all know farming is a risky game, so you need to be able to take advantage of when you have a good crop, with good sugar and the current high global sugar price," Greg said.

"Information is key, the more information you get, the better decisions that you can make."

It's not all dismal in the Queensland sugarcane fields with some districts having a positive year and finishing the crush on a high.

In the Cairns region the growers supplying Mulgrave mill have had an excellent season and according to CANEGROWERS Cairns Region Chairman **Stephen Calcagno** the performance of the team at the MSF Mulgrave Mill should be commended.

"The overall performance and reliability of the mill has been the best for over a decade," Mr Calcagno said. ■

WE'LL WALK YOU THROUGH IT



Smartcane BMP recognises and celebrates the way you farm. And it's not as hard as you think.

You're always looking for ways to improve your farm. So chances are you're already doing BMP on your own.

Get in touch with your district facilitator to see how easy it can be. We're here to help.

Mark and Andrew, Burdekin



Contact your district facilitator to find out more.

QSL GROWER PRICING UPDATE

Current as of 24 November 2022.

Sugar Market & Currency



Influence	Commentary	Outlook
Brazil	To date, 490 million tonnes of cane has been harvested and 30.2 million tonnes of sugar produced at an average sugar vs ethanol mix of 45.9%. It is estimated that 32.5-33 million tonnes of sugar will be produced by the end of the season.	Neutral
India	The Indian Government announced a 6 million tonne export quota for the 2022/23 season. It is expected that only 2.3 million tonnes of this will be exported as raw sugar with refined white sugar making up the balance.	
Thailand	The Thai harvest is set to begin imminently after an above average monsoon season flooded many parts of the country. Roughly 100 million tonnes of cane is expected to be harvested (up 10% year-on-year).	
Speculators	Speculators massively increased their net long position to 132,000 lots as the ICE 11 raw sugar market pushed higher through technical "buy" signals and positive commodity risk sentiment.	
Currency	The AUD skyrocketed to a high of 67.97 US cents in November as markets turned optimistic amid speculation the US Federal Reserve would pivot away from large interest rate hikes as inflation begins to cool.	

The outlook ratings above are in relation to AUD/tonne sugar prices. A bullish outlook is considered positive. A bearish outlook is considered negative.

KEY INDICATORS

	24/11/2022	Monthly change		24/11/2022	Monthly change
ICE11 Prompt (Oct22)	19.55 USc/lb	+1.16 USc/lb	\$AUS/\$US exchange rate	\$US0.6272	+\$US0.0000
Brazilian Real/\$US exchange rate	5.35 BRL	+0.14 BRL	\$US Index	106.08	-6.80
Brent Crude Oil	\$US85.41/barrel	-\$US6.97	Chinese Yen/\$US exchange rate	7.16 CNY	-0.05 CNY
Ethanol/Raw Sugar Parity	16.80 USc/lb	+0.30 USc/lb	S+P 500 Index	4,027.26	+361.48
Net Spec Position	132,000 (net long)	+86,000	RBA Overnight Cash Rate	2.85%	+0.25%

RAW SUGAR PRICES



This is a whole-of-season ICE 11 price chart current as of 24.11.22, based on a current 5:1 pricing ratio for the 2022 Season, and 1:2:2:1 ratio for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 Seasons.

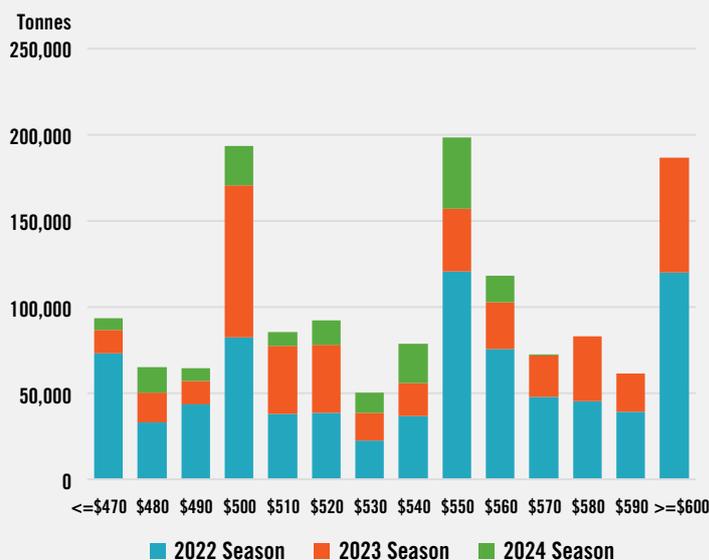
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Grower Pricing



- > The highest grower-managed pricing levels achieved by growers using QSL products to date (all gross price actual/tonne) are:
 - 2022 Target Price = \$660 / IFC \$665 (Mar23)
 - 2023 Target Price = \$600 / IFC \$605 (Jul23)
 - 2024 Target Price = \$560 / IFC \$570 (Jul24)
 - 2025 Target Price = \$540 / IFC \$545 (Jul25)
- > Key Dates:
 - 20 February 2023: Last day to price 2022-Season Target Price Contract tonnage before the pricing window is automatically extended and roll adjustments apply.
 - 20 February 2023: Last day to fill or roll orders for the March 2023 ICE 11 Contract in the Individual Futures Contract and/or Self-Managed Harvest Contract.
 - 20 February 2023: 2022-Season Pricing Completion Date for MSF Sugar districts. Any Target Price Contract or Individual Futures Contract tonnage which remains unpriced after this date will be priced by QSL at the next market opportunity.

QSL GROWER-MANAGED PRICING FILLS – 2022, 2023 & 2024 SEASONS



This chart captures all pricing achieved as of 24.11.22 by growers from across all sugarcane growing regions using QSL's Target Price Contract, Individual Futures Contract and Self-Managed Harvest products. Prices quoted at AUD/tonnes actual gross.

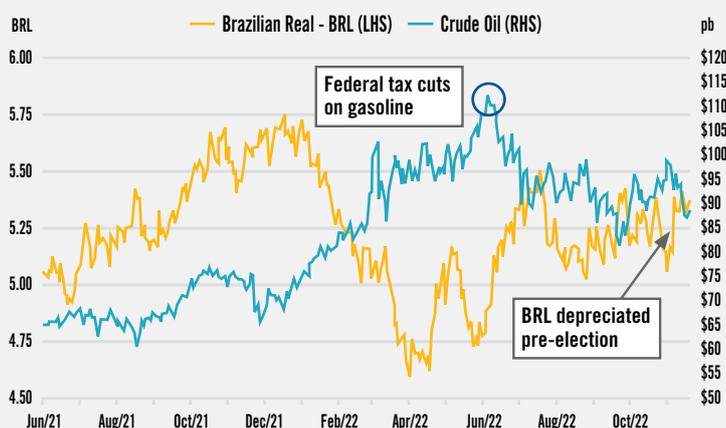
Brazilian Election

Brazil has experienced one of the most polarising elections in its history, with former President Lula (2003-2010) recently emerging victorious over the incumbent President Bolsonaro. The new government faces ongoing challenges which have the potential to impact the sugar industry next season, in particular the decision surrounding whether federal taxes on gasoline will be reinstated.

Gasoline tax cuts earlier this year materially lowered gasoline prices at the pump and therefore dragged ethanol prices down, leading Brazilian mills to maximise sugar production this season. Confidence that federal gasoline taxes will be reinstated continues to rise, especially if crude oil prices continue to fall (see chart below).

This decision will play a major role in the sugar/ethanol mix for the next Centre South (CS) Brazil cane harvest, which will likely start as early as March 2023 as there is a consensus there will be some standover cane. If taxes are reinstated, this could lend support to raw sugar prices in the coming season as ethanol parity could rise 1-1.5 USc/lb equivalent.

Brazil's home currency, the Brazilian Real (BRL), has already been negatively impacted by the post-election period, depreciating from 5.03 to as low as 5.34 against the US Dollar. There are, however, long-term expectations that the BRL may strengthen by the end of 2023 when the market has more clarity on the new government's intentions.





WHY ARE FERTILISER PRICES SO HIGH?

2022 has been a frustrating season for growers. Wet weather has disrupted harvesting operations. Workforce shortages have led to delays and poor mill performance has extended the season length.

One positive has been the steady climb of the world sugar price. However, even this has been overshadowed by the ever rising cost of farm inputs, especially fertiliser.

In CANEGROWERS First Cut episode 2 engineer and sugarcane grower **Damien Ziebarth** gives an overview of how the fertiliser industry works. Damian is the previous Operations Manager for fertiliser giant Incitec Pivot and was

General Manager of Operations at QSL for over a decade.

“Cost of gas has gone up, manufacturing supplies have reduced, demand has gone up.

Advertisement

Reef protection regulations

IMPORTANT INFORMATION for sugarcane producers

From 1 December 2022, sugarcane producers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions will need to follow minimum practice agricultural standards under the Queensland Government’s Reef protection regulations.

Reef protection regulations also apply for beef cattle grazing and banana growing in these regions and agricultural advisers must keep records of the tailored advice they provide to producers about the minimum standards.

Find out more

For further information or to order an information pack:

Visit: www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Call: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Email: ESReef@des.qld.gov.au



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"Cane growers are really quite sophisticated in how they buy their fertiliser ... But there's a lot of cost associated with having that fertiliser ready for you."

That's the reason why the fertiliser prices are where they are today,' Mr Ziebarth said.

"Where does Australia fit into this story? We have a very vibrant industry in agriculture, but sugar consumes only a small amount of Australia's fertiliser.

"We don't have a lot of impact, we're relatively small.

"Cane growers are really quite sophisticated in how they buy their fertiliser - they get soil tests done. They have blends often with three, four, maybe five different elements in their fertiliser. So that's really a sophisticated model where you go to a local supplier to get that blend ready for you.

"And the service that we get is excellent because you can get whatever you like pretty much within three days. But there's a lot of cost associated with having that fertiliser ready for you."

Chris Gillet is project manager for the Farm Business Resilience Program, which is being implemented by

CANEGROWERS. Chris explores the options available to growers to help mitigate high input costs like fertiliser to assist with maintaining profitability practices in CANEGROWERS First Cut episode 3 and he says now more than ever, it is important for growers to really understand their costs of production, engage with the tools that are available, to get a strong feel for how prices are impacting businesses.

The CANEGROWERS First Cut series is available exclusively for members on the CANEGROWERS website. ■

Pictured: Cane grower Damien Ziebarth understands how the fertiliser industry works. He is the previous Operations Manager for fertiliser giant Incitec Pivot and was General Manager of Operations at QSL.

What are your plans for the future of your farm?

Are you hoping to transfer the business to the next generation?

How do you balance their needs and still fund your own retirement?

Do you find yourself having these conversations and unsure what to do, then don't miss the latest in the CANEGROWERS Business Essentials Program

The succession planning workshop will be delivered by the highly experienced solicitor Kylie Wilson, Partner at Holding Redlich law firm. Don't miss the opportunity to tap into her wealth of succession planning knowledge.



Register your interest and check out the whole suite of workshops

www.canegrowers.com.au/page/resources/business-essentials

CANEGROWERS BUSINESS ESSENTIALS

professional development for growers

This program is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program.

DOUBLING DOWN

by Renee Cluff

After spending the best part of this harvest season trialling Australia's first John Deere dual row harvester, the Tully district's largest cane grower has pushed ahead with its purchase.

The Condon family runs both cane and cattle operations in far north Queensland and they are firm believers in investing in efficiency and productivity.

For them, trialling the latest sugarcane industry machinery – John Deere's CH960 dual row harvester – was a no brainer.

This year, it's forecast to cut around 160,000 of a 200,000-tonne crop from 2,000 hectares at their Tully farms.

The early results were so positive, farm owner Chris Condon moved ahead with purchasing the harvester well before the close of the season.

"It was a pretty simple decision for us because we are cutting all of our own cane," he said.

"We're picking up three to four hours in labour every day.

"The beauty about it is it's achieving as good or often a better result than we were achieving with a single row, so it was an easy decision.

"If you can cut the number of passes in half, you can slow the machine down and let the harvester actually do the job it's designed to do and it does it really well."

Complementing the harvesting efficiency are three 20-tonne haulout trucks, that are saving around 30 per cent in fuel costs through fewer returns to the bins.

There are certainly improvements in the cost per tonne of harvesting, however Chris is also pleased with the quality of

the billets and the remaining stools, which he says are just as good, if not better than what a single row counterpart can achieve.

While the dual row model weighs more than 35 tonnes, it's designed for row spaces between 1.7 metres and 1.9 metres.

Chris's farming system is based on the latter and he's yet to see any evidence of compaction challenges.

"We have cut in some wet conditions with it and you can see where it's been but actual trials will be needed to find out more and that's not a short term thing," he said.

"Certainly, it's been nothing but positive so far and the ratoons are looking better than they ever have.

"Around the world they're seeing better ratooning with the double row over the single row.

"The layout of the harvester means that the base cutters are further out in front, so my theory is that they're cutting the cane before the harvester is actually ripping it out.

"Considering this is the first one in Australia I certainly haven't had the opportunity to do any of those trials yet.

"But obviously I'm totally sold with it. It's definitely the way of the future."

Chris believes it's not only the way of the future for his family's operation, but for the industry as a whole.



"I'm totally sold with it. It's definitely the way of the future."



He cites a lack of innovation in harvesting in the 20 plus years he's been growing sugarcane.

"The industry has to go to double row," he said. "The way we've gone with single machines is to pay for them you have to put a lot of area into those contracts and of course they have to compromise on a few things to be able to pay the bills.

"There hasn't been a lot of leaps and bounds, the contract harvesting needs looking at seriously.

"But for contractors, they would have to take more into consideration regarding a dual row harvester and part of that is it's classed as a wide load on the roads so getting it between farms is more difficult.

"I also believe growers aren't paying enough to get their cane cut.

"That's a hard pill for the industry to swallow, but there has to be checks and measures in place as well. We need to be paying for a certain quality of job."

It's been 20 years since the Condons purchased their first Tully district property, expanding their Mount Garnet cattle operation to include a Wet Tropics fattening block.

Named Tully River Station, it was once part of the King Ranch empire.

Leased by the Queensland Government to a descendent of the Texas King family in the 1960s, it became the largest tropical cattle property in Australia before being converted to freehold and sold off.

The Condon family snapped up more than 4,000 hectares from Bundaberg Sugar in 2002.

They had never grown cane before and initially ploughed the plants out to make way for cattle.

However, as the global sugar market strengthened in the years that followed, they began converting cattle paddocks back to cane land.

"Some of the cane land here we had put back into grass for five or six years and then put it back into cane and that cane is still producing exceptionally well now so that long term fallow was really good for us," Chris said.

"It's something I'm looking at in the future - more long-term fallows.

"We bought a tractor and a laser level and an excavator and just started to develop.

continues next page ►

"We were doing it properly from the start with laser levelling, drainage and that was always our view not to cut corners and to develop the farm properly for efficiency,

"That's been the basis for us to expand us much as we have.

"Our developing of the farm always has efficiency in mind so that ties back to the dual row harvester, it's the same efficiency mindset."

These days, his father Neville concentrates on the cattle business, while Chris is in charge of cane, however they can each take over either operation.

While Chris says grazing runs in his blood, he's enjoyed immense satisfaction from a deep dive into sugar, particularly developing what he describes as very wet, not very productive grazing country into A grade cane land.

Without a multi-generational background in sugarcane production, the family's not locked into any traditional practices and have found that many facets of the cattle business apply to the sugar industry.

"Dad always likens it to if you own a cattle station the first thing you need to understand is you need to spend money, you need to invest in your business," Chris said.

"So you spend on your breed stock and it's exactly the same way with cane.

"I always get clean seed from the Productivity Board every year and we get tissue culture whenever we can, so it's totally disease-free seed stock and Dad likens that to buying new bulls and putting new genetics into your herd all the time."

"Nothing's off the table and that's why our crew are genuinely happy in their workplace and satisfied with the jobs they do."

Recently, the family purchased another neighbouring farm to further supplement their cane production, for which they're averaging 100 tonnes to the hectare.

Chris credits this higher-than-average yield in part to what he says is a forward-thinking, professional crew.

"The crew we have working with us, they are all progressive," he said.

"If we have an idea or if someone on our crew comes to us with an idea, we all look into it.

"Nothing's off the table and that's why our crew are genuinely happy in their workplace and satisfied with the jobs they do."

While the team has been experimenting with everything from biological fertilisers to a variety of break crops, Chris reckons it's getting the basics right which makes a huge difference.

"The laser levelling is massively important and our topsoil is our most valued asset so we treat it like gold," he said.

"We remove the topsoil, level the ground out and put the topsoil back on. It's expensive but it pays off in the long run.

"We value the drainage, the nutrition, the trace elements.

"We tick off on all the fundamentals, all the basic things like is the pH within an acceptable range, did we not run all over the stool in the wet when we harvested, did we have the right variety in there.

"I think all the reef regulation focus has had a detrimental effect across this region because people have tended to concentrate on nitrogen and not all the things that help grow your crop.

"The focus is now shifting again to growing the best crop.

"If we lift productivity through the roof by following those basics, whatever nitrogen you put on, the plant's going to take it up so there's next to no surplus. Happy days."

For a grower who's already achieved so much in a relatively short space of time, it certainly is happy days indeed. ■

Pictured: Neville concentrates on the cattle business, while Chris is in charge of cane.







Local help at the farm gate for sugarcane growers

Supplied by QRIDA

With the 2022 sugarcane crush winding down soon, it is a great time to start thinking about business and succession planning.

Ready to help you is Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) Regional Area Manager for Central Coast and Whitsundays, Tegan McBride.

With a Bachelor of Business and experience in the agricultural sector, Tegan is well-equipped to help primary producers find the right QRIDA loan for their farming business and guide them through the application process.

"If you're an aspiring farmer, you could get up to \$2 million with a First Start Loan to help you buy into the family business," she said.

"It's critical to complete a disaster preparedness checklist so you're not caught off guard."

"Or if you're looking to make your property more resilient against dry conditions, we have a range of drought support grants as well as loans ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000."

With cyclones, flooding, and storms forecast for the region into early next year, Tegan is also encouraging primary producers to get ready for disasters.

"It's critical to complete a disaster preparedness checklist so you're not caught off guard," she said.

"Following a disaster, ensure you safely take photos of any damage, and make sure you check QRIDA's website to see what financial assistance may be available to you."

Tegan has recently taken the reins from QRIDA's former Regional Area Manager for Central Coast and Whitsundays, Peter Crowley, who has retired after 21 years with QRIDA.

Get in touch with Tegan on 1800 623 946 or email her at tegan.mcbride@qrída.qld.gov.au

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Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority

+ Grow your sugarcane business with QRIDA

QRIDA's new Regional Area Manager for the Central Coast and Whitsundays region, **Tegan McBride**, is keen to help canegrowers in her region grow their sugarcane farming business through our range of loans, including*:

- **Sustainability Loans** of up to \$1.3 million to help primary producers tap into new and emerging on-farm technologies, improve irrigation systems or purchase or upgrade plant and machinery
- **First Start Loans** of up to \$2 million to help new and next generation primary producers purchase their first primary production enterprise, including from family members.

 **Find out more by scanning this QR Code or speak with Tegan or your local Regional Area Manager by calling 1800 623 946.**

*The information contained herein is for general information purposes only. You should not rely upon this information as a basis for making any business, legal or any other decisions.

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Not only does this make us one of Australia's largest super funds, but it also means that we can offer more value to our more than two million members. Like a track recording of returning 9.0% p.a. over 10 years to June 2022 for our *Super Savings* Balanced option. And services that won us the Canstar Outstanding Value Award in 2022.

It's more super



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Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. SuperRatings Fund Crediting Rate Survey – SR50 Balanced (60-76) Index, June 2022. Pre 28 February 2022 returns are for the former Sunsuper Balanced option. The Australian Retirement Trust *Super Savings* Balanced option has adopted the pre-merger investment strategy of the Sunsuper Balanced option. Members invested in the Lifecycle Investment Strategy are invested 100% in the Balanced Pool, which has identical investments to the Balanced option, until age 55. *Super Savings* products issued by Australian Retirement Trust Pty Ltd (ABN 88 010 720 840, AFSL No. 228975) as trustee for Australian Retirement Trust (ABN 60 905 115 063). Consider the *Super Savings* PDS before deciding and TMD at art.com.au/pds. Member numbers include *Super Savings* and QSuper members as at June 2022. See award information at art.com.au/awards.



SMARTCANE BMP ON YOUTUBE

By Kate Gowdie
Smartcane BMP Manager

In recent *Australian Canegrower* magazines, we have featured each of the Smartcane BMP core modules including industry standards and required farm practices.

If you're looking for more information or to hear from Smartcane BMP accredited growers directly – visit the Smartcane BMP Playlist on the CANEGROWERS YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/300bC7q>

Hear growers describe their experience with Smartcane BMP. There are five short clips of growers and facilitators discussing Smartcane BMP requirements, in their own words.

KEEPING RECORDS FOR SMARTCANE BMP



There is no one size fits all when it comes to Smartcane BMP record keeping requirements. As long as growers capture the required information, can access it readily and keep data for the required periods, the format records are kept in is not crucial. Listen to growers describe different methods for recording and the processes they use to ensure data is captured easily.

IRRIGATION RECORD KEEPING ON QUEENSLAND SUGARCANE FARMS



In this video, Burdekin Smartcane BMP Facilitator Jasmine Girgenti explains why it's important to know your soils water holding capacity, the crops water requirements and rainfall amounts to determine accurate irrigation volumes. Irrigation data capturing systems are also discussed.



CHEMICAL STORAGE AND RECORDS ON QUEENSLAND SUGARCANE FARMS



Keeping abreast of chemical record keeping requirements may seem overwhelming at first. Smartcane BMP accredited growers discuss their systems for capturing important information and the tools and resources available to assist, including the CANEGROWERS Farm Chemical Record Book – available through your local facilitator.

CANEGROWERS TULLY CELEBRATES 100 SMARTCANE BMP GROWERS



With over 80% of Tully's total cane area accredited in Smartcane BMP, this district leads the way in Smartcane BMP uptake. Hear from growers and the local facilitator, Nick Stipis, about what Smartcane BMP means for Tully.

VIRTUAL BUS TOUR: SMARTCANE BMP TELLS THE STORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



Tells the Smartcane BMP story of brother's Paul and Joe Schembri from Mackay. Paul discusses why Smartcane BMP standards are important from an environmental perspective and how participation in the program helps showcase the cane industry's stewardship credentials to the world. ■



GNAWING ANXIETY

By Robyn Devine and HCPSL

RATS A MAJOR CONCERN AS STANDOVER ESTIMATES INCREASE

More standover cane in districts is providing ideal conditions for rodents and it's becoming a problem of plague proportions.

The challenge this year with a longer than average season and bigger crops is there is a higher-than-average possibility of major rat infestations and over the last few weeks productivity services and growers have seen extensive damage amongst the sugarcane fields.

Two species of rats cause the most damage to sugarcane in the central and northern cane districts, resulting in significant loss to both sugar content and tonnes of cane if they are not managed. Both species are native grassland animals and are protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

The cane field or ground rat, *Rattus sordidus*, burrows in the ground, making tunnels around 5-10 cm in diameter which slope downwards to a nesting chamber with a bed of dry grass where as many as 23 rats can occupy one single nest.

Burrow systems are usually no more than 40 cm deep. In cane fields the burrows often follow the rows, while in non-crop areas holes are found near grass clumps, stumps, fence posts and large stones.

CANEGROWERS Environment and Sustainability Senior Manager **Dr Michael Quirk** said as an agile climber the climbing rat or *Melomys burtoni* makes grass nests and will migrate into cane fields from adjacent harborage areas. They require suitable non-crop harborage areas to maintain their population and are known to reinvade the canopy after the harvest.

"When we have cane that is taller and with the current standover crop that is sitting there longer, it becomes a perfect habitat," Dr Quirk said.

"Baiting would normally be done via ground distribution during a normal season where vehicle access to ground level can occur but once cane gets out of hand and you can't be driving through it, it's a bigger challenge.

"With an excess this year of lodged cane we anticipate significant rodent issues and growers may be looking for support.

"It's important that districts have their Damage Mitigation Permits in place and growers are using the correct Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) registered products."

Under a Damage Mitigation Permit provided by the Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) sugarcane growers can cull the *Melomys burtoni* and *Rattus sordidus* rodents found in their sugarcane fields. The registered rat baits available to the industry are Ratoff® and Racumin®.

Because of the large crop to harvest this year and the late finish to the season, **Lawrence Di Bella** Manager for Herbert Cane Productivity Services Limited (HCPSL) is urging growers to monitor fields yet to be harvested for rat activity.

"High numbers of rats and significant crop damage has been observed across the Herbert cane growing region in the past few weeks," Mr Di Bella said.

"The crop damage is at record highs with many in the industry saying it is probably one of the worst years for rat damage in decades.

"Large areas of devastated cane have been observed across the district in the last few weeks causing significant losses in cane yield and lowering of CCS levels. Some blocks have been reported to have CCS levels below 6 due to the rat damage that has occurred.

"As a part of an integrated rat monitoring approach, rat baiting can be considered. HCPSL has been working with DES and CANEGROWERS to secure an aerial and ground application rat baiting permit, for use in the Herbert cane growing region."



According to the Sugar Research Australia (SRA) fact sheet Rat Management in sugarcane successful rat management requires an integrated approach. Baiting by itself is unlikely to be effective.

They advise that keeping blocks and headlands clean and weed free and managing harborage areas are also key to mitigating rodents.

Also encouraging biological control like attracting natural predators, native owls with nesting boxes and a coordinated approach with neighbouring farms can be effective.

It's important to discuss with the local productivity services the issues and any baiting intentions and timings to ensure the permits are in place.

Dr Quirk said Smartcane BMP rat management is about ensuring the grower has a clean farm, that is not a lot of grass build up nearby to cane fields.

"This can be challenging, if there is a riparian area surrounding the farm or drains where it's not viable to be able to maintain mowed clean areas," Dr Quirk said.

"But then if that's the case it's important if a grower does use baits to discuss this with their productivity services team, and to use the prescribed recommendations for that area and to keep accurate records." ■



Pictured: Rat infestations can cost growers tens of thousands of lost income if not treated properly.



Rattus Sordidus damage affects yield in two ways, bitten stalks which reduces the tonnes of cane/ha and a potential secondary attack by other pests, rat-bitten cane is prone to attack by bacteria and fungi, and by insects such as sugarcane weevil borer. This can result in a 15-20 per cent loss of CCS.

Losses of 10-30 per cent can result from a combination of lost tonnes and reduced CCS. Ground rats usually damage the lower 20 cm of the cane. If cane is lodged, ground rats are capable of damaging the whole stalk.

Cane damaged by ***Melomys burtoni*** is chewed about 1.5 metres above ground level. The bitten stalk is usually bent over at the point of attack. Climbing rat damage is often found in blocks beside harborage areas. Damage commonly extends from the edge of the block in for about 15 metres.

Reduced yields are similar to those caused by ground rats. Bitten stalks reduce the tonnes of cane/ha and open the stalks up to secondary infection by bacteria, fungi, and insects which lower the CCS.

Damage caused by climbing rats is generally much less than that caused by ground rats. Because climbing rat damage occurs on block edges, this sometimes leads to an impression that climbing rats cause more damage than ground rats - however this is not normally the case.

Source: Rat Management in sugarcane - SRA fact sheet.

CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

Supplied by CANEGROWERS district offices

MOSSMAN



Harvest week - 22



CCS to date - 12.38



Tonnes to date - 623,134 (81.99%)

At week ending 20 November Mossman mill had processed a total of 623,134 tonnes of cane for a mill average of 12.38CCS. Coastal growers have supplied 412,308 tonnes of cane for a coastal mill average of 11.70CCS and Tableland growers have supplied 210,826 tonnes of cane for a tableland mill average of 13.70. Far Northern Milling has given the growers an End of Season Notice for 20 December.

The Bargaining Agents met on 25 October to discuss the crushing to-date and the transport issues. On 27 October a direct lightning strike from an electrical storm damaged the main Alternator which put the mill back about five days with about 12 hours of stale and deteriorating cane to deal with. With the late start and late finish to the season the coastal cane is feeling the brunt of reduced sugar levels and deteriorating cane quality and there is growing concern about the potential impact on the 2023 crop.

Mossman Agricultural Services (MAS) facilitated a Feral Pig, Rats & Grub workshop (pictured) for growers and stakeholders on 16 November, speakers discussed feral pigs, rats, grubs, electric ants and the use of drones. Brad from the Douglas Shire Council explained their Feral Pig program, how the Council budget is allocated and about a current application being developed for grant funding. It is his ambition to get another full-time trapper back in the Shire. The meeting was well attended and there was good debate about how to move forward with these pest issues. The biggest issue with feral pigs continues to be the lack of accountability from government around both funding and management of government controlled lands.

The CANEGROWERS Mossman Annual General meeting was held on Thursday 24 November at the Mossman bowls club. With crushing operations still in full swing, the Grower End of Season meeting is to be held at a separate date.



TABLELAND



Harvest week - 23



CCS to date - 13.76



Tonnes to date - 537,706 (92.71%)

So far this month the wet weather has held off mostly with a few late afternoon storms rolling over the district but not delivering enough water to interfere with the harvest. One lightning strike did cause a fire in the middle of the cane paddock, luckily the rain associated with the storm put the fire out reducing the amount of damage.

The Tableland mill is due to finish crushing on 30 November. The cogen plant had further testing to meet statutory requirements to allow full generation commencing on 21 November, this did cause some

downtime which resulted in delayed cane for some of our members.

The Mossman mill has advised its end of crush date is 20 December and the amount of standover cane is dependent on the weather, the transport and harvest contractors continued efforts to maintain cane supply to the mill.

Tableland CANEGROWERS held its Annual General Meeting during November. Thank you to the members who attended. Appreciation is extended to Mick Ward (MSF) and Peter Dibella

(FNM) for doing their presentation on this year's season.



CAIRNS

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 12.48

 Tonnes to date - 1,232,435 (100.20%)

The affect of some early storms has been felt although at the time of writing, for most, the region remains relatively dry. For those growers supplying Mulgrave mill, the season ended on 17 November. Mulgrave is the first mill to finish in Queensland and the Management and Workforce from within MSF Sugar are to be congratulated. Those growers supplying South Johnstone are also heading into a similar finale after a successful crushing season. Regarding the cane there is a good foundation for next year's crop, but

some follow up rain will be needed. Growers are taking advantage of the weather and finalising work in the paddock.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all growers across Queensland a happy and safe festive season, not to mention all the industry stakeholders locally and more broadly that we work with and depend on during the year.

INNISFAIL

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 11.68

 Tonnes to date - 1,488,372 (99.22%)

The Innisfail cane growing district and wider community are mourning the loss of a young man in a tractor rollover. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family and loved ones and support is ongoing to all have been impacted by this tragedy.

The end of the season is fast approaching for growers in the South Johnstone mill area with an estimated finish date 29 November. Growers in the Innisfail district have welcomed news that MSF Marketing and QSL have developed a temporary means for them to self-manage their harvest pool tonnes for the 2022 season. Information sessions about this process were hosted by QSL on 23 and 24 November which were well attended.

Five shed meetings were held across the district on 10 and 11 November as part of the Cassowary Coast Reef Smart Farming project hosted by CANEGROWERS Innisfail. There was a great turnout for the meetings with growers getting to see the latest, local water quality data and early results of tests for Pachymetra and nutrition in third ratoons soils. Bernard Shroeder reiterated the importance of a balanced farming system and Behavioural Scientist Sam Moore was also there to learn about how the team can better support growers.

The district is looking forward to some rainfall (preferably once the harvest is over) as the crop, on some soil types, is showing signs of moisture stress.

TULLY

 Harvest week - 25

 CCS to date - 12.51

 Tonnes to date - 2,518,885 (86.86%)

The Tully district has now completed over 85% of the 2022 crush and the crushing season is expected to be completed by mid-December. The average CCS is 12.52 to date, with a current mill area yield of 99.4 tonnes/hectare. The season estimate remains at 2,900,000 tonnes.

Tully CANEGROWERS held their AGM this month and welcomed guest speakers CANEGROWERS Chairman Owen Menkens and CEO Dan Galligan who provided updates on the Blockchain Project, Sugar Plus Roadmap and a range of other matters.

SRA held two workshops providing growers with information on Fertilising Late Harvested Crops and Final Ratoons and will provide two more workshops focused on Strategies for Successful Soil Sampling later in the month.



Continues next page ►

CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

HERBERT RIVER

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 11.85

 Tonnes to date - 3,904,727 (80.51%)

The Herbert River district has crushed approximately 4 million tonnes up to the middle of Week 24 with CCS for the season so far at 11.88. We have had more rain recently which combined with the poor mill reliability is hindering the season end.

There is more rain forecasted for the coming weeks which will add to a very trying year.

In November CANEGROWERS Herbert River Director and Herbert River Catchment Landcare Group Chairman Paul Marbelli along with Hinchinbrook Shire Councillors Andrew Crisp and Donna Marbelli hosted the Jubilee community tree planting and commemoration at the Dungeness Viewing platform.

CANEGROWERS Herbert River were saddened to hear of the passing of Tony Palmas. Tony was a passionate and

dedicated grower and contributor to the sugar industry in the Herbert River including working with research organisations such as BSES, CSIRO and Productivity boards. Tony served on the Macknade Mill Suppliers Committee from 1980 to 2001 and the CANEGROWERS Herbert River board from 2001 to 2004. Tony was a willing participant for a number of programs including water quality where he was one of the first growers in the district that adopted water quality testing in waterways surrounding his farm and right down to paddock level. Tony was also involved in several innovative projects which included cutting edge farm management practices.

Tony was an invaluable member to the local sugar industry and to CANEGROWERS Herbert River.

We would like to thank Tony for his service to the industry and pass on our sympathies to his wife Helen and family.

BURDEKIN

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 14.00

 Tonnes to date - 6,972,231 (85.55%)

So close but yet so far. At the time of writing the district had delivered 85% of the cane and had recently received rain of up to 90mm which brought a temporary halt to crushing.

Week 23 Ending 19/11/22:

Mill	Adjusted Estimate	Delivered	Delivered %	Remains
Inkerman	1,787,856	1,438,948.36	80	349,058
Invicta	3,067,896	2,804,286.69	91	263,609
Kalamia	1,662,562	1,313,163.73	79	351,630
Pioneer	1,744,730	1,420,565.45	81	324,274
Total	8,263,043	6,976,964	85%	1,288,570

CCS season to date is 14.01 and is falling. It is going to be a challenge to get that last 15% in, but everyone is up for it because we have been here before and whilst a wet finish is not pretty, we know what we need to do.

The Burdekin district is faced with a significant variation in budgeted finish dates across the four mills ranging from 17 December for Invicta Mill, 31 December for Kalamia and Pioneer Mills and 7 January for Inkerman Mill and these are a moving feast due to wet weather and mill stops. To try and address this variation, we have asked Wilmar to transfer more cane and instead of closing Invicta Mill, after it has crushed out Invicta's cane, to keep it open to crush cane from the other three mill areas to try and get more of the remains crushed as it is a risky time of the year to have cane in the paddock. There is no point in leaving cane in the paddock at these mouthwatering high sugar prices and we need it converted into crystal sitting in the Townsville Bulk Sugar Terminal as soon as possible.

What we have not done well as an industry is to put more science around the subject of cane transfer as it is currently too loose and lacks rigour. Over the last two seasons in particular, we have asked Wilmar to consider trigger points and to make cane transfer decisions earlier than what has been implemented, which has often been too little and too late particularly for a mill like Inkerman which is at a structural and geographical disadvantage. The purpose of a good cane transfer proposal is to build margin into the system to counter poor mill performance and wet weather to mitigate a late season end. When the mill decides to do it too late and not in a meaningful quantum, we get caught with our pants down when the proverbial hits the fan and we end up with a late finish at a terrible cost of lower CCS and lost productivity in subsequent seasons. We intend to meet with Wilmar to try and progress this issue for future seasons.

The CBL Board was kind enough to receive an invitation from Louise Nicholas, the Ag Science teacher from Home Hill State High School to present to sixteen of their Year 11 Ag students on 15 November (*pictured*). The Board provided an update on the importance of the sugarcane industry from the local level through to the national level, who CANEGROWERS is and what we do and what the challenges and opportunities are for the industry. Most importantly, students were encouraged to seek work and a career in the sugarcane industry and stay in the Burdekin as it is a good industry to be involved in, with a variety of careers from the farm, mill and industries which support and service growers and millers. CBL would like to thank the students who participated, Louise Nicholas and Home Hill State High School.

BURDEKIN (CONTINUED)

The CBL AGM was scheduled for 30 November with the guest speakers being Lower Burdekin Water on the Warrens Gully Upgrade project and also CANEGROWERS Chairman Owen Menkens giving an update on what the peak body is doing for the industry. Based on feedback from members, CBL is changing its financial reporting period to a calendar

year so that future AGMs can be held in the slack season instead of in the busy crushing.

In the meantime, let's hope we can get all of our cane off for the 2022 season before Christmas. On that note, we would like to wish all of our members and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



PROSERPINE

 Harvest week - 21

 CCS to date - 14.16

 Tonnes to date - 1,375,241 (77.26%)

2022 continues to be a challenging year for the Proserpine industry, while it is pleasing to see the crop return to a reasonable size, wet weather and mechanical issues in the factory will extend the harvest season, potentially into the New Year.

Mill throughput over the past five weeks was less than 350,000 tonnes, significantly below budget expectations. Wet weather accounted for some of the shortfall with 4.5 days crushing lost due to regular afternoon storm activity in early November. Falls of between 50 – 100mm were recorded across most parts of the district.

Factory availability was also hampered by a prolonged power blackout caused by a cane fire which damaged nearby power lines and the wet weather has also impacted sugar content with average weekly CCS falling below 14 units for the first time since mid-August.

While the season-to-date average CCS is currently still above 14, crop maturity and forecast wet weather will guarantee a continued decline. Despite the recent downward trend, there has been some good sugar tests over the last few weeks, highest CCS was 17.38 from a rake of plant Q183 from the Lethebrook Productivity District.

Given the likelihood of an extension to the crush, CANEGROWERS is working with the mill to harvest as much of the crop as possible and growers are reminded about the Christmas curfew period – movement of oversize machinery should be safely and carefully planned, should growers be unsure of requirements, please contact this office for assistance.

MACKAY

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 13.12

 Tonnes to date - 4,194,866 (73.98%)

PLANE CREEK

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 13.12

 Tonnes to date - 1,217,037 (81.14%)

While none are happy with the prospect of cutting low CCS cane well into the New Year, unless the monsoon arrives that is what growers across Mackay and Plane Creek are facing.

That will take us into the Christmas Curfew for oversize vehicles, but the CANEGROWERS Mackay Grower Services

team, led by Michelle Martin, brought together a very successful information day. Four staff members from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (MHVR) and Queensland Transport and Main Roads (TMR) visited Mackay to work with local stakeholders including member harvest contractors, growers representatives, Mackay Regional

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CANEGROWERS REGIONAL ROUND-UP

MACKAY/PLANE CREEK (CONTINUED)

Council, CANEGROWERS Proserpine and Mackay Sugar to come together to streamline the process of acquiring permits to continue road use with oversize vehicles across the Christmas period.

The day was rounded out with a visit to the Camilleri farm at Erakala. Grower Andre Camilleri is a Mackay Area Committee member and a harvest contractor. The visit offered the chance for the NHVR and TMR staff to take a look at some of the large machinery that operators may be seeking permits for and to ask questions.

The day was highly productive, with open discussion about



the permit process that built a two-way understanding and potential to streamline the process in the future.

CANEGROWERS Mackay also held its AGM on 23 November, with guest speaker Nikki Wright, Greater Whitsunday Regional Director with the Queensland Government Department of State Development, speaking on the mature progress in developing the Mackay region cane growing industry as hub for production of "future food" (plant-based protein).

Any growers requiring assistance with any issues are encouraged to call the office.



BUNDABERG

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 13.45

 Tonnes to date - 870,651 (81.34%)

Bundaberg Sugar mills processed 50,859.79 tonnes for the week ending 13 November. This brings the season to date to 824,477.37 tonnes. The average CCS for Bundaberg Sugar mill for Week 22 was 13.76 CCS and the season CCS average for Bundaberg Sugar Mill is at 13.45 CCS. The highest individual CCS for week 22 was 16.00 units for Q240 Plant.

With the harvest going a bit longer than previous years growers are reminded of the restrictions for moving vehicles wider than 2.5m during the Christmas period. If growers think they will be travelling on critical roads between Christmas and New Year, they need to apply for permits to travel. For assistance please contact Matthew Leighton on 0437 084 035.

SunWater irrigation customers in the Bundaberg Distribution Scheme are currently participating in a three year electricity cost pass-through trial that allows scheme level electricity cost savings (if any) to be passed through

to irrigation customers at the end of the financial year via a credit applied to eligible irrigation customer bills. In 2021-22, SunWater spent less on electricity than was recovered from customers in the Bundaberg Distribution Scheme which means eligible irrigation customers who used water in 2021-22 will have had a credit of \$13.26/ML applied to their bill in October 2022.

With fertiliser prices remaining high and likely to do so until at least early next year, the use of a legume crop to fix some additional nitrogen for the following crop is of significant benefit. There is also the advantage that the nitrogen from the legumes does not need to be counted in the Nitrogen and Phosphorus budget that every grower is required to have prior to applying fertiliser to a cane crop in 2023, including planting an autumn crop. To find out suitable varieties and other information about soybeans including marketing and harvesting, contact Matthew Leighton on 4151 2555 or 0437 084 035.

ISIS

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 13.10

 Tonnes to date - 632,035 (75.24%)

We are still meeting regularly with Isis mill to discuss the crushing progress. As this update is being written we are yet again looking at a high possibility of another significant weather event disrupting the crushing this week. We

are constantly assessing harvesting equity and assisting growers to work through any concerns they have within their group. We have also focused on ensuring the accuracy of growers' estimates is communicated to Isis mill to

ISIS (CONTINUED)

ensure there are no unforeseen knock-on effects as the season progresses.

There has been lots going on in the Isis region over the last month including:

Audit Review - we attended Isis Mill and conducted a mid-season audit review. We discussed the new audit template we have been trialing this season and the audit process in general and made arrangements for another meeting early in the new year.

QSL Meeting - we met with the QSL Board and key staff members followed by a grower meeting. QSL provided a market update, assistance with QSL Direct and other marketing related information.

Sugar Cane Growing 1-0-1 – we hosted a group of volunteers from Bundaberg Tourism. These volunteers man the Gin Gin, Childers and Bundaberg Tourism Information centres. They receive many questions from visitors about the sugar industry from how it's grown and harvested to where they can get a billet to taste! CANEGROWERS Isis Chairman, Mark Mammino and Cordalba grower Mark Weiss talked the group through growing sugar cane from planting to harvest and milling.

SRA Field Day – we attended the SRA Field Day where we got to see a drone in action, heard about new varieties for our region, disease testing and the local expert analysis program.

Pictured: (top) Bundaberg Tourism volunteers with Chairman Mammino and Cordalba Grower Mark Weiss, (bottom left) Chairman Mark Mammino with Bundaberg Tourism volunteers, (bottom right) Grower John Tanner at the SRA Field Day learning how to drive a drone. Photo credit: Joanne Hall.



MARYBOROUGH

 Harvest week - 23

 CCS to date - 13.07

 Tonnes to date - 436,721 (67.71%)

By the end of week 24, we have now reached 464,792 tonnes delivered. This is just one day short of matching last year's crop, and we still have several weeks of December to continue harvesting. CCS has remained flat, and the season average is 13.09. The base this year was set lower than normal and will cover the situation for a while yet.

The weather has been obliging and dry for a couple of weeks with some irrigation now commenced on plant cane and soybeans.

Our Board has been busy seeking terms on a CSA with Childers to ensure growers can supply somewhere for 2023.

The Maryborough Mill project seems to have slowed with regards to securing the funding needed for a 2023 start but further updates are again due any day.

It's that time of year for the District AGM to be held in December. A firm date will be advised in the first week of December and financials circulated to members.

As the season is still rolling on the AGM isn't called the end-of-season meeting, the same thing happened last year. We also did have a Christmas shirt competition though and this year it seems appropriate to do the same.

ROCKY POINT

 Harvest week - 4

 CCS to date - 14.20

 Tonnes to date - 45,129 (12.40%)

The 2022 season had the latest start in memory on 29 October. Due to this late start, growers will need to crush well into January, weather permitting.

At the end of week 4, Rocky Point has crushed a total of 45,129 tonnes at an average CCS of 14.20.

The crush so far has been sporadic, with a 4-day maintenance stop in week 4, a further blow to growers, considering the late start. The mill intends to shut down during the Christmas period for almost 12 days, a position

against growers wishes, and continue crushing through January, CCS and weather permitting.

CSPA negotiations have finally commenced with the Rocky Point Mill for a 5-year rolling agreement. We are hoping this does not drag out too long and that we have a satisfactory agreed upon outcome with our miller.

CANEGROWERS Rocky Point are doing everything we can to try and mitigate grower losses as a result of the miller's inability to start crushing our cane in July, as contracted.

CELEBRATING OUR INDUSTRY

Part of the membership role is meeting with people. Talking with growers, engaging with members and nurturing our extensive networks that support the CANEGROWERS organisation. This helps keep in touch with members, understand the issues, and work with people that can help us achieve our goals.

November 18 was National AgDay a timely opportunity to celebrate and share with regional communities and city folk alike, the importance of the farming sector and the quality food and fibre we produce.

CANEGROWERS hosted an event in Brisbane to showcase our industry and how we contribute to the economy. Guests included people from the industry, agriculture and government representatives including Senator Murray Watt, the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management

I had a chance to speak with the Minister about the season, sustainability and the work of the growers. It was great to see how engaged and supportive he is of the work we're doing as an industry.

ROCKY POINT

I also attended the CANEGROWERS Rocky Point AGM last month, a far less celebratory affair, as growers discussed the disastrous season they are having. The growers have dealt with floods, a waterlogged soya bean crop, fire ants, urban encroachment, hooning, illegal dumping and a mill that's only just fired up in October and crushed just 37,000 tonnes of cane at the time of the AGM.

They're a resilient bunch in Rocky Point but the growers are understandably frustrated. They won't get all their cane off and will be crushing over Christmas if the weather permits.

SUPPORTING GROWERS OVER THE CHRISTMAS CURFEW

Unfortunately, this story is playing out across other districts too, with Mackay, Mossman, Burdekin and Proserpine possibly crushing through the Christmas/New Year period. These circumstances bring with it some challenges, especially travelling on roads during the Christmas curfew.

This is where relationships come into play. CANEGROWERS has been working hard to ensure road access for growers and has led to some good outcomes and ongoing relationships with TMR and NHVR allowing CANEGROWERS to get support for permits and conditional road access over the Christmas curfew period.

The Christmas curfew dates apply to any vehicle considered oversize from midnight on 23 December to midnight on 3 January. Applications need to be made ASAP to allow sufficient time to be properly assessed by TMR and Queensland Police Service. Support is on hand through CANEGROWERS district offices and the NHVR HyperCare Team for lodgement of applications.

BLOCKCHAIN IS ONE STEP CLOSER

A milestone was reached last month when the first shipment of fully traceable, sustainably produced raw sugar was loaded for export at the Port of Townsville. This shipment is a proof-of-concept trial that links sugar produced from sugarcane grown by Smartcane BMP accredited growers to a buyer in South Korea using blockchain technology. For the past few years, CANEGROWERS has worked with KPMG Australia on blockchain technology designed for the sugar industry to show traceability of sugarcane accredited by the Smartcane BMP program. The intent is to support market access, identify opportunities for value creation in the supply chain and deliver value back to sugarcane growers. ■



MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT & INNOVATION MATT KEALLEY

KEY POINTS:

- ▶ National AgDay provides an ideal opportunity to showcase the innovation and initiatives within the industry.
- ▶ Growers are a resilient bunch but growers in Rocky Point are understandably frustrated that they won't get all their cane off.
- ▶ With many districts crushing through the Christmas curfew submissions for permits and conditional road access should be lodged ASAP.
- ▶ Blockchain technology designed for the sugar industry is helping to support market access and identify opportunities for value creation.

THE BIGGER PICTURE AND SUGAR PLUS ROADMAP

CANEGROWERS provides leadership to successfully steer the sugarcane industry into the future for growers to survive and thrive.

To do this we need to understand some of the mega trends which may affect the world, Australia and ultimately your farm.

There is no shortage of theories (the sugarcane industry is no exception) all speculating about what will happen in the future.

The reality is that nobody knows with absolute certainty. After all, who would have predicted the effects that the response to COVID had on the world economy?

I was fortunate enough to attend the TROPAG International Agricultural Conference hosted by University of Queensland's Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI) with over 1,000 participants representing 53 different countries.

The main theme was around what research solutions were required to produce food for the growing population in the tropics with **climate** change, world **conflicts**, **COVID** and the **cost of food**. The so called four Cs.

The research solutions were based around issues which are mostly already on the sugarcane industry agenda. These included genetics to cope with factors inhibiting productivity (plant breeding and gene editing for disease, pests and weather), better predicting factors for improved decision making on farm (data trends, weather forecasts and climate change), improving sustainability and how to increase production with a reduced environmental footprint (farming systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions), producing healthy foods and possibly the most important from a sugarcane future perspective the change to a bioeconomy (new products from sustainable renewable sources - sugarcane).

It was interesting to see that the Sugar Plus Roadmap provides a vision which is very consistent with the theme of the TROPAG conference. Sugar Plus shows a future based on the best knowledge we have today and a good, educated view as to what will be required tomorrow.

The longer-term view of Sugar Plus is based on a substantial increase in demand from the bioeconomy and goes on to say "Demand for sustainable hydrocarbons from farming rather than the fossil fuel industry will likely increase significantly over the next 10 to 20 years, especially for bioplastics and biofuels for heavy transport and/or aviation. This would increase demand for sugarcane-derived products dramatically, benefiting countries with the capacity to expand the harvest and that invest in processing infrastructure."

There is potential for substantial expansion of the industry as the backbone for Australian bioeconomic superhighway – so long as environmental and ecological sustainability can be assured. This will require significant government policy support and offers opportunities both for existing and new industry stakeholders.

As mentioned, this is a longer-term solution and one of the critical issues in implementing the Sugar Plus Roadmap is that all participants are actually on the same road. This will take leadership at all levels and CANEGROWERS will be part of this.

Sugar Plus Roadmaps can be found at sugarresearch.com.au/resources-and-media/sugarcane-industry-roadmap/ ■



INDUSTRY AND FARM INPUTS BURN ASHBURNER

KEY POINTS:

- ▶ Understanding global mega trends helps in steering the industry into the future.
- ▶ Climate change, world conflicts, COVID, and the cost of food, the four Cs, remain topical for growers.
- ▶ There is potential for substantial expansion of the industry as the backbone for bioeconomic opportunities.
- ▶ Implementation of the Sugar Plus roadmap requires all stakeholders to be on the same road.



SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT

MICK QUIRK

KEY POINTS:

- ▶ Economists refer to programs that use a pricing mechanism, such as grants or reverse auctions as Market Based Instruments (MBI).
- ▶ In theory MBIs can deliver superior outcomes at lower costs than regulation because there is more flexibility in how landholders achieve an outcome.
- ▶ Issues with MBIs include impacts on production, uncertainty around costs and benefits to growers and the environment and reputational risk.
- ▶ CANEGROWERS is currently developing a policy position on this issue so that governments understand the issues and potential for MBIs in our industry.

WHAT PRICE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

The past ten years have seen growers engage with Market Based Instruments in record numbers, through participation in the Reef water quality programs. More recently, programs have commenced paying for Reef Credits, and in the future, growers could receive payments from the Emissions Reductions Fund (ERF) for management actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Reef Credits and the ERF are another type of market-based instrument (MBI).

So, what is a Market Based Instrument?

Farmers, being the custodians of much of Australia's land, have a major influence on the environment. While most growers are good environmental stewards, nonetheless it is true that poor management practice can lead to adverse environmental outcomes.

Government has a number of policy levers to encourage good management practice, including information-sharing, regulation, and 'pricing' mechanisms.

Economists refer to programs that use a pricing mechanism, such as grants or reverse auctions, as MBIs. The theory is that a well-designed MBI can deliver superior, more lasting outcomes at lower cost than regulation. This is because MBIs provide flexibility in how the landholder achieves an outcome and incentivises buy-in.

The simplest form of MBI used in Reef water quality programs has been direct grant funding. Subsidised technical advice, e.g. for nutrient or pesticide management, has also received significant government funding.

Reverse auctions are a more complex mechanism where interested landholders indicate the payment they need to justify changing management, such as reducing nitrogen rates to reduce loss of dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) into waterways. The funder can choose the participants that will provide the most improvement at the least cost. Such projects are short-term and it is not always clear that a persistent change in practice has occurred.

What policy position should CANEGROWERS have on these constructed market mechanisms? It is hard to argue with the concept, at least in theory. But there is enough experience with MBIs in agriculture generally to know that their value for either the investor or the participant should not be assumed.

Issues with MBI's include:

- **Impacts on production** – many programs seek reduced inputs or taking some land out of production. This may work for individual producers, but the cane industry relies on adequate cane production to sustain district sugar mills. So, widespread adoption of practices that reduce crop production could threaten the industry's viability
- **Uncertainty about costs and benefits for growers and the environment** – in complex issues like catchment water quality there is incomplete understanding and information. This means either very high transaction costs (e.g. spending a lot of money on measurement) or sacrificing information quality in the name of cost-effectiveness (e.g. over-reliance

on modelling). Calculations are often clunky and how these translate into payments can be unclear

- **Reputational risk** – many growers have been involved in various Reef incentive projects over the years, typically providing major in-kind resources to these activities. But the Government report cards don't reflect this effort. While we now understand that the poor report cards are a result of unrealistic government targets, inappropriate modelling, and difficulties linking management actions with water quality outcomes, growers still get the blame. So participation in such programs does not guarantee improved industry reputation.

Market-based instruments of different forms are likely to remain, at least while governments see some benefit from them. Any industry position on the use of MBIs targeting growers will need to emphasise:

- Critical evaluation of the appropriateness of using an MBI for the desired environmental outcome
- Caution about unintended consequences, such as reduced cane supply
- Methodology that is robust, agronomically-sound, transparent and passes the 'pub test'
- The need for tools that help industry and growers assess trade-offs at the district and farm scales, respectively.

CANEGROWERS is currently developing a policy position on this issue so that governments understand the issues and potential for MBIs in our industry. ■

CORRECTION

Australian Canegrower recognises the photos in the WALKING THE WIRE - Communication key to successful farm succession planning article in the November issue were taken by Joanne Hall (Cover, pages 25, 26 and 28) and Simon Sarra (pages 26 and 27).



Great mentor remembered

A staunch supporter of sugarcane growers and a great mentor, that is how Guido Ghidella is being remembered after an impressive life representing growers for more than 50 years.

Guido, who passed away in October aged 85 years, held various roles throughout his life, including Chairman of Babinda Mill, Vice President of the Australian Sugar Producers Association, Chairman of Babinda Canegrowers Organisation, and Board Member with Queensland Cane Growers Organisation.

CANEGROWERS Cairns Region Chairman **Stephen Calcagno** said Guido had been a great mentor to him, especially in his early days with CANEGROWERS and was in fact instrumental in encouraging him to take on a role.

"Guido drove out to my farm and tapped me on the shoulder and said how about you put your hand up and, in that way, he instigated my career as a grower representative," Stephen said.

"He loved a good debate, but he always strived to find a way to get consensus, to reach an outcome. He had a way of looking forward and took a whole of industry viewpoint."

Stephen explained that when Guido was the Chairman of CANEGROWERS Babinda and with **Robert Rossi Jnr** Chair of CANEGROWERS Mulgrave, they started the foundations of combining the districts to form what is now known as CANEGROWERS Cairns Region, he knew what the growers needed moving forward – strength as one voice.

"When Guido did retire," Stephen said "he had the unique capacity to let go and allow the new representatives to steer in their own direction. Not everyone that has held major roles has that capacity.

"Above all he had the closest working relationship with his brother Romeo that I have ever seen, they were inseparable, they supported each other in business and in life, it was really inspiring to see." ■

Pictured: Guido and his brother Romeo appeared in a CANEGROWERS advertising campaign.



Labour hire – are cane growers caught?

Labour hire arises generally where a person hires out, loans or supplies their workers to work for someone else. With the current labour shortage, this is a common occurrence in the sugar industry with some growers lending their workers out to the harvesting contractor who is short staffed.

In 2018, the Queensland Government introduced a labour hire licensing system that requires labour hire providers to be licensed.

At the time there was concern that some workers who worked for a labour hire business were being exploited and some labour hire businesses were not acting appropriately and damaging the labour hire sector generally.

LABOUR HIRE PROVIDER

A labour hire provider is a person who supplies labour hire workers to do work for another person or business. In the agricultural sector the most common example is a contractor who supplies workers to a fruit or vegetable grower to pick produce.

LICENSING SCHEME

The scheme requires all labour hire providers to hold a licence under the *Labour Hire Licensing Act*. They must be fit and proper persons, financially viable and comply with all relevant laws.

The Scheme also requires anyone using the services of a labour hire business to ensure the labour hire business is licensed.

Significant penalties apply for operating without a licence and for using an unlicensed provider.

The government has established a Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit that actively monitors compliance and undertakes audits of workplaces.



By Chris Cooper,
CANEGROWERS
Legal Advisor



CANE GROWING CONTEXT

It is not uncommon for growers to lend employees to each other or to harvesting contractors to help from time to time.

The following scenario is an actual example I was asked to consider recently:

The grower employs a worker full time on the grower's cane farming activities.

The harvesting contractor (which has no relationship to the grower and is a business in its own right) from time to time needs assistance.

The grower on an intermittent and occasional, ad hoc, temporary basis outsources his worker to the harvesting contractor to help them out.

At all times the worker remains employed by the grower and receives full pay from the grower as usual.

On an intermittent basis the grower will send an invoice to the contractor to be compensated for 'lending' his worker to the contractor.

The question asked was whether the grower may be regarded as a labour hire provider and caught by the relevant legislation which requires a licence to be held.

According to *the Act*, a person (provider) provides labour hire services if in the course of carrying on a business the person supplies, to another person, a worker to do work.

Whilst initially it may seem the example cane grower is caught, *the Act* allows regulations to prescribe that a person in a particular class is not caught by the licensing requirements

provided the person in the class does not carry out labour hire activity as a dominant purpose of their business.

Regulations were made specifying the persons in the class that are exempt and include that an in-house employee will fall within that class of person that is exempt.

To be regarded as in-house the worker must be provided on a temporary basis only and in circumstances where the employee must be employed by the provider on a regular basis with a reasonable expectation that employment will continue and primarily works for the provider rather than on secondment.

In the scenario described above, I advised that the grower is not likely a labour hire provider and is not required to be licensed because the grower's employee should be regarded as an in-house employee.

SUMMARY

A grower who on a temporary, occasional basis lends out an employee worker to another business such as another grower or a contractor is unlikely to be caught and unlikely to be required to be licensed.

(This article contains general advice only. The particular facts and circumstances of each case always need to be taken into account).

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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MSW 4T, dual compartment, stainless steel, 3 row stool split or drop on top fertilizer box \$18,000 + GST. Hi -Rise sprayer, dual 600 L tanks, 5 row, AR pumps, air inducted tips \$28,000 + GST. Innisfail. Ph: 0437504272.

6T Newton Bulk Fertilizer Bin \$4000. Ph: 0402686714.

Ford 7840 4WD 18.4x38 Rear with PAVT Centres \$28,000 + GST; 5 Furrow Rev. Plough \$800 + GST. Ph: 0429652235.

Multiweeder \$350, Cane Drill Marker \$250 Ph: (07) 4065 2165.

2012 Case 8800 full track cane harvester fitted with Trimble GPS and new walking gear. All in good condition. 20t EHS tri-axel cane hauling bin fitted to 7810 John Deere. Ready for work. Near new 6t side tipper. Mulgrave area. Ph: 0407160673.

John Deere 7330 premium 8,100 hours IVT transmission \$75,000 + GST. Ph: 0439965921.

Fiat 980 2WD-3,500hrs, Fiat 1000 2WD - 5,000hrs, John Deere 4040 2WD - 3,600hrs, Chamberlain JD 4080 2 WD - 5,000hrs, Case 2590 2WD - 5,700hrs, Michigan 110-14 Elevator Scraper-New engine & Spare engine, Massey Ferguson

3635 4WD - 5,500hrs, 6 tonne tipper bin, Silvan Euro Spand CX2 Spreader, Portable bulk bin, Bunning Lowlander Mk 40-60 Ag Spreader(near new), complete tracks to suit cane harvester, half tracks to suit cane harvester, and fuel trailer tank. Mulgrave area. Ph: 0407160673.

Toft 6000, CAT 3306DI, Rotary Chop, Bent elevator, standard topper. Good condition for age. Ph: 0740675327.

2x Ian Ritchie 6t side tippers. VGC. Ph: 0740562063.

Herbert River-Burdekin

Contract for sale 90000 - 95000 tonnes in the Giru area for 2023 season. Contact Walter on 0429840117 for equipment list and will consider splitting the equipment.

International 1086 Trike. Tractor manufactured as a trike from the factory and has the genuine front pedestal and twin wheel set up. Full set of front weights, standard 3 point linkage and locally produced mid mount implement toolbar. Tractor in good operating condition other than the air con which doesn't operate. Selling due to lack of use and taking up valuable shed space. \$12,000 + GST. Ph for photos or more info: 0429181276.

Mackay-Proserpine

2.5 tonne side tipper for planting. \$2500 + GST. Ph: 0417595771.

4280 Chamberlain tractor, John Deere engine, for spare parts only. 4080 Chamberlain tractor, air con cab, John Deere engine. In good condition. Ph: 0409 264 351.

Howard 80" AR rotary hoe reconditioned x 2. Parts available for Howard AR, AH & HR models. Taking orders for reconditioning of hoes on AR, AH & HR models with most sizes available. Ph 0407643441 or 49595883.

2 fan stripper \$500, Moller single chain planter \$4000, 1x Roberts 6T goose neck trailers \$5000 ea, Grubber & box \$300, Hodge upright planter \$300. Ph after 7pm: 0408776366 or 0749591765.

Toft 6500 full track plant cutter. Swinging knife. Caterpillar engine. Fair condition. \$12,000 offers considered. Ph: 0419764616.

Massey Ferguson 8110 4-wheel drive with cab, 135hp, only 2,636 hours in good condition. \$55,000 incl. GST. Ph: 0438606578.

12t self-propelled 6x6 elev infielder. VGC. Mackay. Ph: 0438606578.

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

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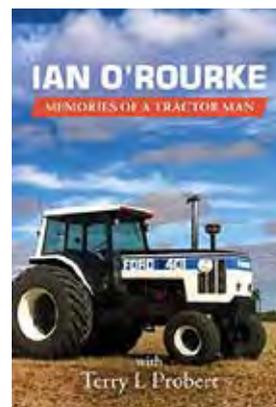
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Don Mizzi 741 model on Fiat 750 special turbo plus MF102 half-tracks to suit. Mackay. Ph: 0438606578.

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

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

Bundaberg–Rocky Point

8 x Gav reels with 200 mtrs- 300 mm flumin, Hyd reeler on Inter 514 tractor, flaming cups on trailer, new 200 mtr roll of 300 mm fluming. Qty of bartlet cups. 8 row case vacuum planter with Dickey John monitor. Ph: 0457930627.

Billet planter double dic opener, rubber belt, 1000 Litre fungicide tanks. suscon box, VGC \$35,000. High clearance spray tractor, 1000 litre tank 5 row sprayer \$25,000. Howard 4 board square plough VGC \$10,000. Ph: 0408770163.

HBM billet planter set up for dual row or single. \$10,000. Twin 2.5 tonne billet planter tipper bin, carries 5 tonne \$5,000. All + GST. Ph: 0413584728.

2 row Bonnel fertiliser box with ground drive, 1¼ inch tynes \$1,100 Ph: 0413584728.

Wanted

HBM billet planter and rear tipper bin. Mackay area. Ph: 0419764616.

Wanted to buy double 5 or 6 tonne side tipper with load sharing hitch. With or without tractor. Ph: 0418379253.

Weeder rake. Preferably heavy-duty frame, looking to modify. Condong area. Ph: 0438428113.

Flat bed trailer approx. 3000x2100. Mackay/Sarina area. Ph: 0439752381.

Positions Vacant

Proserpine, Mackay & Plane Creek - DMD Ag Solutions has a casual position available. Precision Ag/Hydraulics business seeking a technician (mechanic/mechanically minded person) to install, service & support variety of GPS & controller systems. Training provided if needed. Email resume to admin@dmdhydraulics.com.au

Work Wanted

Looking for work, has a C Class Licence, Tractor ticket, has done 1 year Haul-out

and 10 years farm tractor work, motor mechanic. Own transport, Innisfail area. Contact Mark: Markvolpe1964@gmail.com or 0432171030.

Property - For Sale

Cane Farm Cooks Lane Victoria Plantation. 69.75 ha. 61.38 ha under cane. High producing area. 1km from Victoria Mill. Road frontage. Ph: 0427912277.

Cane farm 87 hectares - 215 acres at Como Road on Trebonne Creek, 5 minutes from the Ingham CBD. Includes a two bedroom cottage and farm shed. Contact Felix Reitano Real Estate on felix@reitano.com.au or (07)47765007.

70ha Cane Farm with 61.5 ha under cane. Located 8 km from town centre and 1 km from Victoria Mill. Property is flood free with town water supply running along property front. Paddocks have all been lasered and are well maintained and up to date with new varieties. Ph: 0427912277.

Cane farm to lease Munburra, Sunnyside or Oakenden areas. Have own equipment. Ph: 0408011983.

840 meters opposite Moore Park Beach. Coastal Cane Farm 93 Acres and 146 megalitres of ground water. Large storage Shed. 1 x Diesel Irrigation pump for the underground irrigation. There are 2 fenced off areas, currently used for horses and

Rainfall Report

Location	Recorded rainfall (mm)			Average rainfall (mm)
	Month prior (Oct 2022)	Month to date (1 Nov-29 Nov)	Year to date	Jan–Nov
Whyanbeel Valley (Mossman)	151.2	304.2	3039.2	2653.1
Mareeba Airport	33.6	28	822.8	739.4
Cairns Aero	87	19.2	1706.8	1825.5
Mt Sophia	123	66	3556	3120.7
Babinda Post Office	0	0	3611.1	3956.7
Innisfail	77.8	55.8	3095.6	3283.6
Tully Sugar Mill	152.5	17.6	3351.9	3805.1
Cardwell Marine Pde	119.9	82	1636.1	1921.1
Lucinda Township	0	137.6	1863.4	1944.1
Ingham Composite	149.2	147.6	1862.2	1909.3
Abergowrie Alert	0	17	341	1256.2
Townsville Aero	41.6	278.2	1360.4	1007.2
Ayr DPI Research Stn	60.2	30.2	925.4	837.3
Proserpine Airport	170.2	31.8	1292	1268.4
Mirani Mary Street	132.6	85.8	1018.5	1268.6
Mackay MO	79.6	47.6	1071.4	1392
Plane Creek Sugar Mill	52.4	122.7	1137.3	1543.5
Bundaberg Aero	238.8	26.2	1243.4	881.9
Childers South	156.8	37.2	1262.8	782
Maryborough	229.8	17.2	1259	1018
Tewantin RSL Park	158.8	38.6	2437.6	1455.1
Eumundi - Crescent Rd	28.4	0	2326.2	1513.4
Nambour DPI - Hillside	170.6	63.8	2780	1645.8
Logan City Water Treatment Plant	114.2	65.8	1562	994.6
Murwillumbah Bray Park	124.8	18.1	1863	1432
Ballina Airport	247.2	27.2	2776.8	1641.7
New Italy (Woodburn)	192.2	16.6	2481	1239.6

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

Classifieds

cattle. No house on this property. Comes with crop. Ph Larry: 0418496864.

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 2021 crop. Selling due to health reasons. Ph: 0408733793.

Property - Wanted

Wanting to buy/lease cane farm in the Septimus area. Ph: 0417607722.

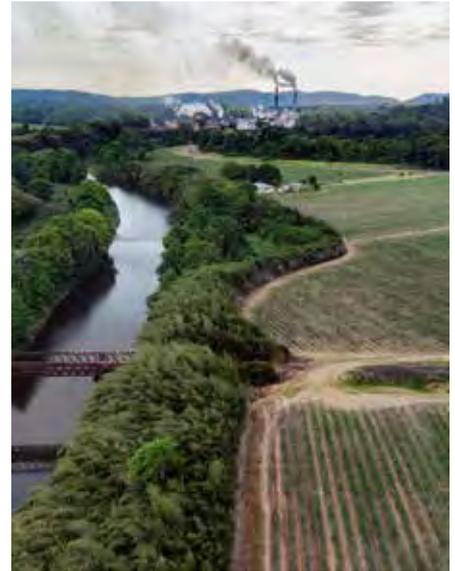
Wanting to buy/lease cane farm. Close to Racecourse mill, Tekowai, Alexandra areas. Ph: 0438545251.

Want to buy farm in the Mackay or Proserpine area. Must have two good condition houses and irrigation. Ph Paul: 0447545550.

WTB: Grazing & Irrigation Property. Grazing to run 300-500 head. 100 - 200 acres irrigation. Located Sarina-Proserpine Regions. Ph James: 0429621145.

Wanting to lease - cane farm in the Walkerston/Eton/Pleystowe areas and surrounds. Ph: 0421520331.

Young grower wanting to expand. Looking for farms to lease. Mulgrave Area. Ph: 0431036229.



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