

# the Australian Cane Farmer

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## ACFA proudly supports Ethanol 2007



ACFA Chairman Ross Walker and ACFA Northern Director with Saab's new BioPower vehicle at the Ethanol 2007 conference in Melbourne.

Ethanol 2007 concluded in Melbourne recently and capped off what was an enlightening week of discussion, debate and education, it was an enormous success.

This is the second Ethanol conference to be held in as many years and many readers may remember the inaugural Ethanol 2006 was held in Brisbane last year.

ACFA was the official representative for the Australian sugar industry at Ethanol 2006 and again played a significant role in organising this year's conference.

ACFA General Manager Stephen Ryan again helped organise this year's conference and said he was very pleased with the outcome.

"Ethanol 2007 has built on the solid foundation laid by Ethanol 2006 and has continued to project the burgeoning biofuel on to the social and political agenda in Australia," he said.

"This year's line-up of speakers was excellent and provided delegates with a broad understanding of ethanol and the positive effects that using the fuel

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May 2007  
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### Breaking News

The Australian Cane Farmers Association's Annual General Meeting and Conference will be held at the Burdekin Delta Cinemas, Queen St Ayr at 9am on Tuesday May 15.

The conference will start at 10am with speakers from the Sugar Research Institute, Queensland Sugar Limited, the CSIRO and the NSW Sugar Milling Co-Operative addressing farmers.

Professor James Dale, Dr Graham Bonnett, John Power and Kim Morrison will address farmers.



Leading farmers into the future

### Conferences, climate changes and industry reforms



By ACFA.  
Chairman  
Ross Walker.

#### Climate Change Workshop

I attended a climate change workshop on March 29 in Brisbane.

There is consensus that some degree of climate change is inevitable but there remain large uncertainties surrounding the likely effects on the agricultural sector, especially at the regional level.

There is growing agreement that the southern half of Australia is likely to become drier under the influence of higher global temperatures and wetter in parts of northern Australia.

Estimates of the increase in potential global average temperatures range from 1.1 degrees Celsius to 6.4 degrees Celsius by 2100.

There is also common belief that there will be a metre rise in ocean levels although some say this could be considerably higher.

#### Ethanol Conference

In April, I attended the Ethanol 2007 Australia Conference in Melbourne. ACFA also assisted with the

organisation of this Conference.

Speakers from all corners of the globe presented in-depth addresses on a wide range of biofuel issues.

2007 Australian of the Year, Doctor Tim Flannery, spoke about climate change, the ever-increasing rate of thaw of the polar ice caps and the increasing greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change.

He said embracing renewable fuels such as ethanol was important and the way forward for Australia.

Professor Ray Kearney from the Dept of Infectious Diseases and Immunology, University of Sydney, spoke about the huge health and economic costs from the use of our current fossil fuels.

The health cost in Sydney alone was estimated \$5.8 billion for all emissions last year.

He stated the use of ethanol will deliver huge health benefits for all Australians.

Bob Gordon, Executive Director of Renewable Fuels Association Australia, stated there was less ethanol used in 2006 than there was in 2002. The small target for 2006 set by the Federal Government has not been met. The major oil companies are not meeting their commitments to the Federal Government and most of the

ethanol is in fact being sold by the independent stations.

Australia's crude oil production continues to decline with an estimated seven years of domestic oil left based on current reserves and usage.

Australia is facing a domestic fuel crisis and Australia's import cost for fuel will be \$1 billion per month in 2007 which represents 70 per cent of Australia's balance payment deficit.

This is not sustainable.

Ethanol is being embraced right across the globe. Australia continues to fall further behind because the Federal Government does not have the determination and commitment to establish a renewable fuels industry.

Australia's miniscule target of 350 million litres by 2010 must be increased immediately and the 10 per cent ethanol cap in fuel removed to allow flex fuel cars greater use of ethanol.

#### Kingsman Sugar Conference

I attended the Kingsman Inaugural Australian Sugar Conference in April also. In excess of 25 speakers from around the globe spoke on different topics over the two days.

The shock was Kingsman's projected surplus for 2007/2008 year of 9.48 million

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### Conferences, climate changes and industry reforms

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metric tonnes raw value.

Others say the surplus will be greater.

The sugar price will struggle to rise under this scenario.

There is a Conference overview in this magazine.

#### Industry Changes

We are all watching with interest the merger proposals centred on Mulgrave Mill.

There must be an outcome where farmers are able to extract a benefit. Farmers are owners of the mill and will have the final say so the decision is in their hands.

It appears Maryborough will offer a real alternative also.

Shareholders of Mackay Sugar are confronted with a

decision of a different type.

A vote is to be conducted before commencement of crushing to determine whether the Co-operative converts to an unlisted public company.

The Mackay Sugar Board's strategy is for a more diversified business including co-generation of electricity and ethanol production.

The change of structure will enhance the ability to raise capital while, at the same time, releasing capital through the issue of shares to farmers.

The ACFA Annual General Meeting and Conference is at Delta Cinema Ayr on May 15.

It will be an interesting day with six industry leaders presenting speeches and answering questions that will cover a wide-range of topics.

Hope to see you all there.

### ACFA proudly supports Ethanol 2007

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will have on our economy, our environment, on our car's engines and most importantly, on our own health."

This year's line-up of speakers included Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile; current Australian of the Year, Tim Flannery and The Honourable John Brumby, Deputy Premier of Victoria.

The conference commenced with an Ethanol 101 seminar that set out the basics surrounding ethanol starting with how it is produced, how it can be used and the benefits it will provide to the Australian environment and economy.

Mr Brumby outlined the Victorian Government's plans to establish a biofuels target of five per cent of all fuel consumption by 2010 and then support the target with a promotion and investment attraction campaign to achieve increased levels of biofuels consumption.

Mr Brumby said that if this target was not met then the Victorian Government would consider mandating the use of biofuels.

Mr Vaile also stopped short of introducing a mandate but did outline Australian Government initiatives that supported ethanol.

He said the core message coming forward from the Federal Government was that of 'consumer confidence' that is, establishing greater consumer confidence in the product.

According to Mr Vaile, the Federal Government is spending millions of dollars encouraging a range of initiatives that include a Biofuel Capital Grants Program and a Renewable Energy Development Initiative.

The Biofuel Capital Grants Program was announced on 25 July 2003 and its intention is to provide a capped amount of \$37.6 million to fund one-off capital grants for projects that provide new or expanded biofuels production capacity.

The Biofuels Capital Grants Program aims to increase the availability of biofuels for the domestic transport market.

Grants have been provided at a rate of 16 cents per litre for

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## ACFA proudly supports Ethanol 2007

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new or expanded projects producing a minimum of 5 million litres of biofuel per annum.

Grants were limited to a maximum of \$10 million per project.

The Renewable Energy Development Initiative is a competitive grants program supporting renewable energy innovation and its early-stage commercialisation.

The program provides matching grants from \$50,000 up to a limit of \$5 million for eligible renewable energy technology projects extending up to three years.

The Renewable Energy Development Initiative program will provide up to \$100 million over seven years to eligible applicants in the form of matching grants to undertake new renewable energy technology activities.

2007 Australian of the Year, Dr Tim Flannery spoke strongly about human activity playing a role in causing climate change and supported the use of cleaner, greener energy such as ethanol.

ACFA Chairman Ross Walker and ACFA Northern Director John Blanckensee attended the conference and both were pleased with what they saw and heard.

"Ethanol 2007 was a great success and ACFA is proud to be involved in such a worthwhile event," he said.

"The conference succeeded in raising ethanol's profile and will raise consumer confidence in the biofuel."

Mr Walker welcomed the Federal Government's ongoing commitment to ethanol but called on them to increase their efforts.

"Australia is taking small steps in the right direction but we are a long way behind the rest of the world and while Government's across Australia are taking the right steps towards an ethanol-fuelled future they must take many more for Australia to enjoy the maximum benefits ethanol can provide."

Mr Blanckensee said a home-grown ethanol industry could provide many benefits to Australia's agricultural sector, but needed stronger support from State and Federal Governments to enable its successful establishment.

"Ethanol has the potential to revitalise the Australian sugar industry and could provide the product and market diversification the industry has been desperately seeking," he said.

"The Australian sugar industry has stated their commitment to ethanol time and time again but for ethanol to truly succeed in this country we need even stronger support from all levels of government."

Mr Blanckensee encouraged all farmers to attend future Ethanol conferences.

"Ethanol 2007 was a great learning experience and all cane farmers will benefit from absorbing the multitude of information events such as this provide."



*ACFA Chairman, Ross Walker, with Australian of the Year, Dr Tim Flannery. Dr Flannery addressed conference delegates during dinner on Wednesday night and spoke about climate change and the positive effects biofuels, such as ethanol, will have on the environment.*

### Calendar

May 11 - SRDC Precision Agriculture Workshop, Cairns

May 14 - SRDC Regional Workshop, Maryborough

May 15 - SRDC Regional Workshop, Bundaberg

May 17 - BSES Central Region Field Day

## Report on Kingsman's first Australian sugar conference

Kingsman – an international sugar and biofuels analysis firm - held its first ever conference in Australia on 23/24 April.

The conference was well attended by the processing side of the industry here, as well as a smattering of farmers.

Also represented were international sugar buyers, refiners, traders, producers and banks (amongst others).

There is no doubt that Australian producers - along with their counterparts from Thailand, Brazil, Guatemala and other "world market" exporters - are concerned about both the falling sugar price and their strengthening currencies.

The sugar buyers in the audience are under significantly less price pressure than last year, but physical premiums and the freight market are causes of serious concern for them.

Pass the surplus: Kingsman released their first forecast of 2007/08 (on an April/March basis), which at 9.48 mln mtrv was something of a shock to most attending.

This followed on from their 2006/07 forecast of 8.68 mln mt, generating an enormous 18 million tonne plus surplus in the two years, certainly not the news producers wanted to hear.

Leading the pack of course was the new CS Brazil crop which has just started to be processed.

It is anticipated that this will generate over 28 mln mt of sugar, up from 25.7 last year (ie an increase of 2.74 mln tonnes).

India is also causing major reverberations around the market – initial forecasts of the 2006/07 crop were of 22-23 mln tonnes, but it now appears that the crop could exceed 26 mln tonnes of sugar, if all the cane can be harvested prior to the monsoon in late May/June.

Further, the next Indian crop may make the problem worse – initial forecasts show that rather than slowing, the next crop may be higher again by at least 1-2 mln mt.

Subsidised exports are a reality already for India (if outlets can be found for the sugar), but the government has also said it will form a buffer stock of 2 million tonnes this year.

Thailand and China have both had better crops this year, and Thailand will probably do the same as India in 2007/08 and increase once again.

Kingsman forecasts the current 2006/07 Thai crop at 6.7 mln tonnes, and next year's harvest at 7.1 mln tonnes.

The Thai speaker at the conference from TRR milling group confirmed that they expect a better crop next year.

China's crop this year is much better in the beet areas, and better in cane. It is anticipated they will produce around 11.6 mln mt of sugar this year, and a little less next year – although Chinese representatives at the conference favoured an unchanged result for next year.

Sugar consumption in China has bounced back from last year's higher prices and is expected to have risen to around 10 kg/head/year – still lower

than most other countries around the world, but up from 6-8 kg only a few years ago.

Sugar price risk: a robust discussion was had regarding the availability of price risk management tools to both mills and the farming sector.

Bank representatives pointed out that during the price hike to over \$500/mt last year, they were able to offer mills SWAP facilities at prices well over \$400/mt for several years forward.

At present lower sugar prices (partly driven by the dramatic supply response to last year's prices), combined with a strong Australian dollar, are pushing A\$ returns to \$250/mt or below in the prompt contract.

This was unimaginable even six months ago.

Delegates heard how the banks are now moving up the value chain to price risk management, in a similar way that the tradehouses a few years ago took over the role of producer pre-financing from the banks.

So in a world where both communication and information are very fast, it's not just factors like the single desk that is being questioned, but also the traditional role of the trade houses.

The latter no longer just buy sugar from producers and sell it to consumers, but they also invest in assets (terminals, refineries and mills) and trade around those assets.

Buying all sorts: Buyers of Australian sugar were well represented, and

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several addressed the conference. One of Japan's biggest refining companies admitted that low polarising sugar was now scarcer, but the legislation is unlikely to be changed hurriedly to admit higher pol sugars.

A representative of one of the newer refineries in Indonesia told of a rapidly changing sector there, with several new sugar refineries being built in the last two years, mostly in the same area.

But high internal prices are also boosting interest in growing more cane in Indonesia, so that refiners might have to share some of this rapidly growing market in future.

In China, while high fructose syrups took market share from sugar last year, the reverse is the case this year, with expectations of lower fructose syrup sales due to high corn prices.

Changing with the times: innovation is of course the key to survival, and a number of speakers told those attending that the industry is changing its outputs to diversify income streams.

While one of Australia's largest ethanol producers wasn't optimistic about the prospects for new ethanol projects in the sugar industry under current offtake and pricing arrangements, that wasn't the case with Proserpine mill's furfural project which is currently being built.

Mackay Sugar and SRI are also taking to new frontiers with a new biorefinery project, and NSW Milling Cooperative is committed to processing all its cane and trash within its new cogeneration project.

Summary: the Kingsman conference broke the mould in being commercially focussed across the value chain for the sugar industry – from the farm sector right through to refiners and food manufacturers.

Topics usually discussed behind closed doors – such as collective selling vs tradehouse involvement, and the involvement of banks in pricing for the farm sector – were discussed and debated.

Short presentations by authoritative speakers were different to normal conference format, and participants were challenged on a range of subjects from currency to ethanol, swaps to nutrition and all stops in between.

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## US groups back reform

More than 75 agricultural and business organisations in the United States are backing a plan for a more market-oriented sugar policy.

Democrat Senator Richard Durbin is pushing for sugar policy reform to be written into the next Farm Bill.

The statement of support from the 75 organisations was signed by a range of agriculture, government and business interests, including the US Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the International Dairy Foods Association, the National Grocers Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, Kraft Foods and Coca-Cola.

One of the main issues of contention around sugar policy is the effect government intervention has had on international trade deals.

"The present US sugar policy - built around government-set price floors, government-enforced marketing quotas and strict limits on imports - is ill-suited for the rapidly evolving markets of the 21st century," the statement says.

"The current sugar policy distorts markets, hampers trade liberalization and will become increasingly costly to taxpayers in the years ahead."

According to IDFA senior vice president, Clay Hough, debate in Congress over a Central America free trade agreement "indicates that the current sugar program encourages opposition to trade liberalisation".

"That hurts both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, which are hoping to benefit from free trade deals," he said.

IDFA also has a special interest in sugar policy because the dairy industry uses 12pc of the cane and beet sugar used for industrial food processing in the US.

Source: FarmProgress, a Rural Press USA publication.

## Scholarships hold ticket to industry success

Australia's sugarcane growers were the big winners at the annual Sugar Research and Development Corporation's Innovation Awards, announced recently in Cairns.

SRDC Executive Director Russell Muchow said that the awards recognise and reward innovation in the \$1.5 billion sugarcane industry, and this year were won by extremely worthy recipients.

"We were especially happy to be able to recognise the work undertaken by the Sugar Yield Decline Joint Venture team with the group taking out the top honour the SRDC Innovation Award," Dr Muchow said.

"This team of experienced and passionate researchers have been working with industry for more than a decade to improve industry productivity and sustainability.

"Their research has provided a sound basis for a sugarcane production system for the future, one which ensures sustainable sugarcane production can be achieved.

"Importantly, the system can be adapted to suit all regions because it encompasses a set of principles rather than a specific recipe," he said.

Growers are seeing the advantages of the new system and are increasingly adopting elements of the farming system to their local situation.

"Thanks to this team's work it is

now widely accepted by growers that establishing permanent beds, adopting controlled traffic to reduce soil compaction, implementing zero or minimum tillage and growing legume breakcrops to help replace nutrients to the soil can all have a significant impact on their profitability and sustainability," he said.

The SRDC Service Award, which recognises the work of an individual in advancing innovative research or development within the industry, was won by Judy Plath who is encouraging growers in the Isis and Maryborough regions to adopt the principles of this new farming system.

"Through her work, Ms Plath has facilitated the planting, growing and harvesting of over 2,000 hectares of soybeans as a break crop in the Isis region over the last three years.

"Impressively, almost 70 percent of the 2005/06 crop was of high value food grade quality and returned over \$630,000 in additional revenue for the district's cane growers.

"Judy is actively supporting positive changes in growers' skills, attitudes and practices," he said

Joint winners in the SRDC R&D Award, Barry Croft and Phillip Jackson were recognised for their contribution to the sugarcane breeding system. "Barry Croft, program leader for biosecurity and crop protection with BSES Limited, is one of the industry's leading plant pathologists and a world

authority on the management of sugarcane diseases.

His work has been instrumental in the response and management of the sugarcane smut outbreak on the eastern seaboard in 2006.

"Phillip Jackson is also highly regarded for his work with CSIRO Plant Industry. Dr Jackson's ideas are leading a shift to more efficient and shorter cycle selection systems which will have significant outcomes for the time it takes to release new varieties, which is great news for the industry.

"We recognise that the sugarcane industry is confronted by many complex challenges, however thanks to the research and development efforts of all award winners, the men and women of the industry are better positioned to make the most of these challenges," Dr Muchow said.

## How WaterSense is winning the west

## The Better Manager series... Managing ill and injured employees

Article provided by McKays Consulting, a division of McKays Solicitors

Many Human Resource Managers will agree that managing an ill or injured employee is the most difficult of people management tasks. The manager must carefully balance:

The personal and financial needs of the injured individual.  
Staff morale.  
The employer's obligation to continue to maintain a safe workplace.  
Legal complexities.

In this first edition of a two part series, we introduce the legal issues to consider. With care, legal risk can be significantly reduced.

Please note, legal requirements vary between legal jurisdictions and can involve both State and Federal law.

This article focuses upon WorkChoices workplaces in Queensland.

Where to begin

The general law of managing ill and injured employees has for centuries been, and still is, that employment is a "contract" between the employer and employee.

The contract of employment ends when the contract is "frustrated" by the employee's incapacity to complete the tasks they were employed for.

The legal question asked is:

"Was the employee's incapacity, looked at before the purported dismissal of such a nature, or did it appear likely to continue for such a period, that further performance of his obligations in the future would either be impossible or would be a thing radically different from that undertaken by him and agreed to be accepted by the employer under the contract of employment?"

That is the foundational legal question for any dismissal for incapacity.

However... to protect workers from harsh outcomes, legislative requirements limit the general law by:

- § Imposing timeframes within which employers cannot dismiss an employee for incapacity.
- § Requiring employers to consider appropriate medical and other information, before making a decision to dismiss.

We will discuss the legislative requirements as follows:

- § Work related incapacity.
- § Non-work related incapacity.
- § Discrimination.
- § Information gathering and decision making.

We can only highlight the main issues, and recommend that you consider taking advice if you are managing an injured employee.

Work related incapacity

It is unlawful to dismiss a worker for work related injury less than twelve months after the employee was injured.

An employee so dismissed can apply for reinstatement to the position if he has medical evidence of capacity for the position.

Therefore employers should wait not less than twelve months before considering dismissal of such an employee. But... a dismissal after twelve months might yet be unfair (if unfair dismissal laws apply to the employer) and/or discriminatory.

Non-work related incapacity

It is unlawful to dismiss an employee for "temporary absence", defined as a period of less than three months of unpaid leave in a twelve month period.

Carefully note that it is "less than three months of unpaid leave". Accordingly, sick leave, annual leave and long service leave do not start the calculation of the three months.

Rehabilitation and redeployment

Queensland Workers' Compensation Legislation requires employers to provide rehabilitation to a worker with a work related injury.

This does not apply to employees with non-work related injuries.

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## The Better Manager series... Managing ill and injured employees

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Also, an employer that can redeploy an injured employee to a suitable position without cost or inconvenience, should do so... but the employer does not have to create a new position.

Next edition

In our next edition we explain:

§ Discrimination and injury management.

§ Information gathering and decision making.

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## Caltex achieves milestone of over 150 stations selling ethanol

Caltex announced it had achieved a new milestone for the number of Caltex supplied service stations selling ethanol blended petrol.

E10 Unleaded, which contains 10 percent ethanol blended with regular unleaded petrol, is now sold at over 150 sites in the Caltex service station network from Cairns to Canberra. This is more than triple the number of sites selling E10 Unleaded in mid-2006.

There are currently 69 sites in the Caltex network in Queensland selling E10 Unleaded, 81 in NSW and 3 in the ACT.

"Caltex is committed to making a significant contribution to the development of a sustainable biofuels industry in Australia," Caltex Managing Director and CEO Des King said. "Reaching the milestone of 150 sites is a great achievement for Caltex and our customers.

"The latest Caltex research shows over 50 per cent of motorists in Sydney and Brisbane who have not yet used ethanol blend petrol would consider using it. This is encouraging for further market growth.

"All new Australian made cars are suitable for use with a 10 per cent ethanol blend and also the vast majority of new imported cars. According to research commissioned by the Australian Government, about 60 per cent of vehicles in Australia are suitable for use with E10.

"E10 Unleaded gives Caltex customers a wider choice of

fuels. E10 Unleaded is the choice for the future as it reduces greenhouse gas emissions and Australia's reliance on fossil fuels.

"Caltex has committed to annual targets under the Australian Government's Biofuels Action Plan through to 2010. We achieved our 2006 target and are on track to meet our higher target for 2007.

"The 2010 Action Plan target of at least 350 million litres of biofuels blended into the fuel mix is the equivalent of at least 3500 million litres of biofuel blends. This volume is equal to 10 percent of Australian petrol and diesel demand.

"Caltex supports the Government's market-based policy approach and remains opposed to mandating the use of ethanol. Instead, governments should ensure that E10 can be priced by suppliers significantly below regular petrol, so consumers will choose ethanol blends instead.

"In the near to medium term, this could be achieved through a production bounty or grant for ethanol producers or some other financial mechanism, which would allow for a larger discount of ethanol blends to motorists at the pump and drive higher E10 sales.

"However, longer term sustainable development of ethanol will require commercialisation of much lower cost production through use of biomass rather than food crops. This emerging technology will enable large volumes of ethanol to be produced more cheaply and enable cost-effective reduction of greenhouse gas emissions."

## Regional Reports

### Mossman Region Report

Having driven down to Tully last week I was shocked to see such a disappointing crop in the Babinda, Innisfail region.

Obviously the late finish to harvest and a big wet has had a devastating affect on the crop.

When coupled with a lower forecast price its going to be another difficult year for farmers still recovering from Cyclone Larry.

In Mossman the crushing is scheduled to start on June 12th and Brian Mahoney will present his marketing report on May 24.

Don Murday  
ACFA Northern Director

### Innisfail Region Report

The weather has fined up and the sunlight is making the crop start to flourish in some areas.

Currently, the crop is slightly below average due to the persistent wet conditions we've been experiencing over the first three months of this year. The last cuts have failed to mature to any sizable amount and the tonnage should be down on last year's figures.

As the finer weather returns the CCS content should rise.

Crushing dates have not been finalised as yet but the Tablelands looks like kicking off in May while the coastal mills are estimated to start in late June.

The Mulgrave crop is looking reasonably good despite the poor conditions and Bundaberg Sugar is doing major works in Babinda in South Johnstone Mill.

The negotiations regarding the merger are still continuing at Mulgrave Mill and a decision is yet to be made. No Smut has been detected in the area.

John Blanckensee  
ACFA Northern Director

### Herbert Region Report

After a wet Easter in which the Dalrymple area received 150 mm we are now enjoying fine Autumn weather. The drier areas of the district are starting to work their ground but I am not aware of any planting yet. The B.S.E.S. Field Day saw a good representation of sites but the crowd was a little disappointing. ACFA had a site and handed out literature.

The ACFA Herbert negotiating team met with CSR Management on April 17 regarding contract issues.

The Mill is still hoping to crush 4.5 million tonnes of cane this season. We are now waiting to be contacted for further discussions.

The SRDC held, a meeting in Ingham to report back to the area on their research work and award Innovative members of the industry for their imitative in various areas.

It was very poorly attended. Branch members attended the Herbert Nutrient Management Review Meeting that was held on May 1.

These meetings are very informative and useful. With the price of fertilizer going through the roof farmers need all the help they can get planning the nutritional needs of their crop.

As this is my last report I would like to welcome Carol Mackee to her new position as Director for the Herbert River and wish her well.

Dawn Brown  
ACFA Herbert Director

### Burdekin Region Report

Planting is now in full swing and new smut-resistant variety KQ228 is available only in limited supplies.

The moderately smut-resistant variety Q208 is in plentiful supply but so far no smut has been found in the area and no spores have been picked up in spore traps.

The weather has been fine with warm days and cool nights.

No firm decision has been made in regards to the crush starting date; however, it will probably commence sometime after the Queen's Birthday holiday.

Kent Fowler  
ACFA Branch Chairman

### Central District Report

Dry and warm weather is permitting many farmers to plant in ideal conditions. Smut resistant varieties are being planted where supplies are available but the choice is limited.

Initial crop estimates are up on last year, with the exception of Proserpine, but dry weather is limiting growth at present and rain is required across the whole district.

Tractor and equipment sales have been strong in the region but the low sugar price is affecting confidence.

The BSES Field Day will be held on May 17 and 18.

Debate is still raging over Mackay Sugar restructure proposals. ACFA is supporting Mackay Sugar Boards recommendations. A vote is to be held shortly.

Ross Walker  
ACFA Chairman

### Southern Region Report

Bundaberg Sugar mills are due to commence crushing on June 19, some plantation cane will be cut before that starting date. Isis hasn't committed to a starting date as yet. Due to the dry weather this year's crop could be 20 per cent lower than last year's.

There has been a smaller than usual planting throughout the district in Autumn but we are expecting a larger than normal plant in Spring.

Recent rainfalls have been between 15mm and 30mm but the dry weather will probably mean that farmers will start with a low water allocation next year.

Errol Zunker  
ACFA Branch Member

### New South Wales Report

Estimates are currently being finalised for the 2007 crop in all three mill areas.

Trends at this stage are indicating a slight reduction on the 2006 figures except for Harwood which is still expected to be a good crop.

Recently the co-operative held information meetings regarding the new payment system for farmers and was widely accepted as being a positive for the industry.

The new payment structure has been implemented so that growers will be paid for the fibre used in the co-generation operation. The key difference between the two payment systems is that the grower will be paid for the pol and not ccs as with the old system.

At time of writing this report soya bean harvesting was well underway in all three mill areas with some very good results. The weather has remained dry with only isolated decent falls.

Wayne Rodgers  
ACFA New South Wales Director

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Leading farmers into the future

# the Australian Cane Farmer

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## ACFA services

### Publications:

The Australian CaneFarmer - published eleven months per year.  
Australian Sugarcane - the leading R&D publication - Bimonthly.

**Representation:** ACFA has a proven record of fighting for farmers where others have either given up or not begun.

**Branch Network & Local Representation:** Make use of your local ACFA branch, call your local director or visit [www.acfa.com.au](http://www.acfa.com.au).

**Corporate services:** World sugar news, Market information, Politics, Local sugar related news, Wage & industrial relations, information Environmental

matters Water issues.

**Industry surveillance:** ACFA is constantly monitoring matters relevant to canefarmers.

**Insurance:** General insurance - ACFA insurance is the market leader. It has the largest share of cane farm general insurance in Qld & Australia:

- Crop insurance
- Life insurance & personal accident insurance - ACFA insurance provides life & personal accident insurance via AON and Australian Casualty & Life.
- Financial planning - ACFA members have access to AON financial planners.

**Pays:** For a low fee, ACFA members have access to an automated pays service.