

the Australian Cane Farmer

ACFA celebrates 100 years of service



General Manager Stephen Ryan with Senior Vice-Chairman John Blanckensee, Chairman Ross Walker, Northern Director Don Murday, Junior Vice Chairman Wayne Rodgers; (front) Burdekin Director Margaret Menzel, Southern Director Mike Hetherington and Herbert Director Carol Mackee.

ACFA recently held their Annual General Meeting and Conference in Ayr.

The event was a great success and a fitting addition to ACFA's centenary celebrations.

The event was opened by Floyd Fowler, who was the first chairman when ACFA restructured exclusively to represent farmers.

Floyd brought a real sense of history to the event and presented an excellent speech that documented everything from ACFA's inception through to its present day achievements.

Representatives from CSIRO, SRI, QSL, CSR and the New South Wales sugar industry presented addresses that left attendees with a better

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Breaking News

Welcome to ACFA's bumpy conference wrap-up.

Inside you'll find all the information regarding the events at our AGM and conference.

You'll also gain an insight into the structure of ASIA thanks to ACFA's commitment to bring farmers the truth.

You'll learn more about Generation Next and what they're doing for the sugar industry.



Leading farmers into the future

ACFA celebrates 100 years of service with conference in Ayr



By ACFA.
Chairman
Ross Walker.

You've probably already read about ACFA's Annual General Meeting and Conference that was held in Ayr recently.

By all reports it was a great day and I want to thank all of the speakers who played a big part in making the conference the success it was.

I also want to record my best wishes to retiring Directors Adrian Ivory, Graham Parker, Dawn Brown and Paul McKay.

ACFA has taken great strides under the stewardship of these four Directors and on behalf of the board, staff and members of ACFA I thank you for your contribution and wish you the very best in your future endeavours.

Departures are met with arrivals and the board of ACFA

is welcoming three new Directors to the fold.

Carol Mackee, Mike Hetherington and Margaret Menzel are new faces to the board of ACFA and I want to wish them well and look forward to working together for the benefit of Australia's cane farmers.

I want to congratulate all of the current board members and in particular John Blanckensee and Wayne Rodgers for being elected Senior and Junior Vice-Chairman respectively.

John has performed brilliantly in his capacity as a Director for the Northern Region for ACFA and has created a thriving branch in the Innisfail area.

He is a fine example of what can be achieved through dedication and commitment to a worthwhile cause and his re-election is a deserved acknowledgement of his tireless service to ACFA.

Wayne Rodgers is also to be recognised for his achievements in serving ACFA's members in New South Wales.

Wayne is an example of the next generation of farmers who have taken an active interest in the industry and are working hard to effect change.

On a personal note, it was very humbling to be re-elected as Chairman and I want to thank the members and the board of Directors for their vote of confidence and their continuing support.

The leadership of an organisation like ACFA is a unique gift and one that I treat with the utmost importance.

I will continue to strive to bring the facts to Australia's cane farmers and will keep on working hard to achieve positive outcomes.

The Australian sugar industry faces many obstacles over the coming year and now, more than ever, a strong and independent voice that is solely dedicated to serving farmers is needed.

Thanks to your support, the Australian Cane Farmers Association, will ensure the concerns of farmers are heard now and into the future.

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ACFA celebrates a successful conference and AGM in Ayr

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understanding of the current situation and future prospects for our industry.

Dr Graham Bonnett from the CSIRO spoke about the reproductive biology of sugarcane and the safe release of genetically modified sugarcane.

Professor James Dale from the Centre for Tropical Crops and Biocommodities at the Queensland University of Technology gave an informative presentation entitled; Biomass to Biocommodities:

Developing Tropical Crops for Industrial Products.

Professor Dale's speech covered a broad range of issues that presented excellent opportunities to the sugar industry to diversify into different markets and benefit from diversified revenue streams.



Paul Heaghney from QSL, Floyd Fowler, Dr Graham Bonnett from the CSIRO, Prof James Dale from QUT and Kim Morrison from CSR.

ACFA's New South Wales Director, Wayne Rogers spoke at length about the developments south of the border particularly in regards to the universal use of Global Positioning Systems when planting and harvesting whole of biomass.

All in all the meeting and conference was resounding success and I want to thank all of the speakers and delegates who attended and contributed to a great day.

Those who are interested in viewing powerpoint presentations that accompanied speeches made at the conference can do so at www.acfa.com.au

ACFA also welcomed a number of new regional directors that will replace those who retired .

Carol Mackee has recently taken over the reins from Dawn Brown in the Herbert area while Mike Hetherington has succeeded Graham Parker in becoming the new director for the Southern Region.

Well known sugar identity Margaret Menzel is ACFA's new director in the Burdekin region and has succeeded Adrian Ivory in that role. Wayne Rodgers, Don Murday and John Blanckensee retained their positions as New South Wales and Northern Directors respectfully. Ross Walker retained his position as ACFA Chairman and took the opportunity to welcome all the directors to the fold.

"As Chairman I take great pleasure in welcoming all new and returning directors to the board of ACFA," said Mr Walker.

"I want to extend a warm welcome to Margaret, Carol and Mike and wish you every success during your tenure with ACFA.

"I look forward to working with all Directors to strengthen and promote our great organisation."

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New board looks forward to strengthening ACFA's presence



ACFA General Manager Stephen Ryan and Professor James Dale from the Queensland University of Technology.

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Mr Walker said he was pleased with the form the new board had taken.

"ACFA's board is a team of experienced and diverse individuals who are capable of fully representing the

diverse views of farmers throughout Australia," said Mr Walker.

"Their diverse array of experiences will aid ACFA in producing fair and thorough policy that best represents all farmers regardless of their location." Mr Walker said he was pleased at how the day unfolded.

"More than a few people approached me and let me know how great they thought the Conference and AGM was."

"It was pleasing to see farmers take an active interest in their industry and I thank them for their continuing support.

"All farmers must continue to work together if we are to affect lasting and positive change in our industry.

"The road ahead isn't an easy one but if we remain united and dedicated to improving this industry then we give ourselves the very best chance of success," said Mr Walker.

ASIA's structure emerges through leaked letter to Minister

Recently the ACFA was alerted to a letter that was addressed to Federal Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry in regards to the establishment of the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASIA).

The Letter was dated March 5 2007 and was written jointly by the Queensland Cane Growers Organisation and the Australian Sugar Milling Council.

Chairman of Canegrowers Alf Cristaudo and Ian McMaster were both signatories to the letter.

ASIA is shaping to be an important issue that will confront cane farmers this year and ACFA believes it is imperative that farmers know as much as possible about the alliance so they can make an informed decision as to whether they accept or reject it.

The following article will identify key points of that letter and that ACFA believes are most relevant to cane farmers.

The main catalyst in the letter for ASIA is the lack of a single point of contact for industry issues.

"In the past, Queensland Sugar Limited has been a point of contact for many 'industry issues', but this role will diminish, particularly after the three year transitional deregulation phase."

"The industry sometimes operates as if there are several industries due to the number of industry organisations, each with independent governance, aspirations and uncoordinated decisions."

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ASIA will weaken farmers' independent voice and threaten industry unity

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This will raise the eyebrows of many farmers as it was Canegrowers who wholeheartedly endorsed the deregulation of the sugar industry in conjunction with the Beattie Government and effectively weakened, according to them, the main point of contact for sugar industry issues, that being Queensland Sugar Limited.

Many farmers were at a loss to explain why Canegrowers would backflip on their long held policy, to paraphrase former Canegrowers Chairman Jim Pedersen of 'dying in the ditch' to protect the single desk without any research or consultation with cane farmers.

It is worth noting that Queensland

Sugar Limited has not been invited to join ASIA and that in itself is unusual when according to Canegrowers own website QSL, the BSES, ASMC and themselves comprise the Queensland sugar industry.

The letter also makes no mention of the BSES being invited to join ASIA.

Alarming, there is no provision in ASIA to unite the number of industry groups already in existence.

It appears ASIA, in its current form, will shun long-standing groups like the Australian Cane Farmers Association and other important unaffiliated regional groups in favour of creating an alliance between Canegrowers and the ASMC.

Many farmers are wondering why Canegrowers, an organisation that claims to represent farmers would prefer to ally with a milling body rather than other farmer groups.

In this era of post-deregulation farmers need, more



ACFA Chairman Ross Walker and Dr Allan Garside Research Leader of the Sugar Yield Decline Joint Venture. Dr Garside was one of a number of speakers who participated in the Conference.

than ever, a strong and independent farmer-body dedicated to serving their interests.

How will Canegrowers balance their obligations to ASIA and the ASMC with their obligations to representing cane farmers?

When the two clash in conflicts of interest who will take precedence?

Queensland farmers had their single desk sacrificed because of the close relationship between Canegrowers and the Queensland Government.

What will farmers have to sacrifice in order to keep ASIA intact?

ASIA is simply another tent and whenever being inside the tent, no matter what, takes precedence, farmers lose out.

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Farmers will need the permission of ASMC to join ASIA

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Another important aspect of the letter was the proposed establishment of regional groups.

"Importantly, our organisations have agreed to encourage and promote the establishment of regional leadership groups and invite established regional leadership groups to become members of the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance."

These regional groups would form and then, if deemed appropriate by Canegrowers and the ASMC, would be invited to join ASIA.

Again, farmers are surprised Canegrowers is championing the formation of regional groups given their recent performance on this issue.

The formation of truly autonomous regional groups has not been born out in practice and this was proven several years ago when Canegrowers voraciously and successfully lobbied the Beattie Government for control of the farmer-owned assets.

For farmers who were unaware of the situation, the assets, which were paid for by all farmers, were held in trust for all farmers by Canegrowers.

Instead of opting to return the assets to the farmers, or a locally owned and controlled company, Canegrowers decided to control regional assets through 'inter-linking constitutions'.

It is worth noting that Canegrowers was granted favourable policy shortly before they back flipped and agreed to the abolition of single-desk selling of sugar in Queensland.

ACFA lobbied the Beattie Government to return the assets to farmers in the form of autonomous regional groups.

Given Canegrowers past record of dealing with farmers who don't share their views, it is probable that any regional leadership group established under ASIA would be little more than a replication of current Canegrowers branch structures and not a true representation of farmers from local areas.

It's also alarming that a milling body such as the ASMC would be dictating to farmers who has the right and who does not have the right to join ASIA and more importantly dictating policy which directly affects farmers.

That is an obvious conflict of interest as ASMC would have the power to exclude farmers who challenged them and any mill they represented.

The most alarming point of all was that the letter which was dated March 5 2007 was calling on Government to sponsor the creation ASIA by March 31st this year.

Had ASIA been ratified by that date it would've been disastrous for farmers who would've woken up on April 1 to find themselves bound to the decisions of a body that they weren't even direct members of.

Farmers at this stage still have no idea of the form ASIA will take due to the reluctance of Canegrowers to disclose even the most basic and fundamental facts to farmers.

Until Canegrowers show leadership and do the right thing by farmers, the sugar industry will continue to remain suspicious of ASIA and will continue to reject it in its current form.

Farmers throughout the Burdekin snubbed by ASIA

Farmers in the Burdekin will not be represented under the proposed Australian Sugar Industry Alliance.

ACFA Chairman Ross Walker has voiced the concerns of many farmers throughout the Burdekin recently when communicating with Federal Minister for

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, The Hon Peter McGauran MP.

"ACFA has been communicating the concerns of cane farmers across Australia to the Minister," said Mr Walker.

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The Burdekin's farmers will lose under ASIA

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"We have alerted the Minister to the flaws undermining ASIA's structure and the concerns many farmers have in regards to its unrepresentative and murky procedures.

"Additionally, no farmer will be able to join ASIA directly nor will there be any mechanism to protect their rights when Canegrowers is bound by ASIA's decisions.

"Farmers are still in the dark as to who Canegrowers will represent should any conflict occur between farmers and millers," said Mr Walker.

"Who will take precedence? Farmers, or their alliance with the Australian Sugar Milling Council?"

"Both Pioneer and the Kalamia Cane Growers Associations have been snubbed by ASIA and farmers from these mill areas will not be allowed to join, according to the Canegrowers letter, until they have formed a regional group that has been approved by both themselves and the ASMC."

"How will farmers be able to maintain a strong and independent voice if they need the permission of the ASMC to join," said Mr Walker.

Recently Mr McGauran replied to ACFA's letter and acknowledged

ACFA's concerns.

He urged Canegrowers to take a wider approach when consulting with industry figures.

"That seems very unlikely given Canegrowers General Manager, Ian Ballantyne's public admission that it was Canegrowers' policy not to acknowledge the ACFA," said Mr Walker.

"Unless ASIA becomes more transparent and representative, ACFA will continue to oppose it in order to preserve the strong and independent voice of cane farmers in the Burdekin and throughout Australia."

Generation Next lights the torch for industry innovation

Generation Next held their annual forum in Townsville recently.

Delegates from across Australia and from all facets of the sugar industry united to discuss, debate and decide how to strengthen the Australian sugar industry.

Generation Next is a movement to empower, support and position future industry leaders.

As well as being a network for younger members of industry, Generation Next runs an annual forum for like-minded and innovative people to come together and work on projects to deliver benefits to the industry.

It gives younger people in the Australian sugar industry a 'voice'. The program is also building the skills, knowledge and networks of the next generation of men and women in the sugar industry so they can increase their contribution to the profitability and sustainability of the industry.

Cheryl Phillips the General Manager of Leading Industries the group that helped organise this year's forum was pleased with this year's forum.

"Generation Next exposed young people from all sectors of the industry to a range of perspectives, knowledge and expertise. This Forum resulted in delegates increasing their confidence and gaining insights into other sectors and regions of industry," said Ms Philips.

"Delegates capitalised on the opportunity presented to discuss key industry issues with political and industry leaders as part of the process of building partnerships."

"The Forum provided a safe environment where young people could learn, voice their opinions and commence working with people from all sectors within their region in order to strengthen the capacity of the industry."

"It's clear to me that a lot of young people in the industry are committed to the long term future of the industry and are wanting to become more involved by gaining a 'big picture' perspective and actively contributing to the industry's future. This process requires a relatively small investment and yet is already producing significant outcomes within each region."

ACFA is proud to support Generation Next.

Young farmers encouraged to join Generation Next



One of the innovations of Generation Next was the establishment of regional groups. Groups like 'Brisbane Raw' (pictured) will promote the sugar industry throughout Australia.

Anyone interested in participating in Generation Next should call Leading Industries on (03) 5825 1233.

Insert ½ page ad here

ACFA calls for Director Nominations for the Central Region

ACFA calls for Nominations

As per section 38 of the Australian Cane Farmers Association constitution:

38. Term of appointment

(a) No Director shall hold office for a period in excess of 4 years, or until the 4th annual general meeting following the Director's appointment (whichever is the longer) without submitting himself or herself for re-election.

In 2007, the member of the Board who has retired from office is Paul McKay.

ACFA is now calling for nominations for the position of Director for the Central region.

Members of the company are able to nominate for the Director position in their region only.

If you would like to nominate someone for the position of ACFA Director, please complete the enclosed nomination form (including signature of nominee) and return it to ACFA offices by the closing date of 29th June, 2007.

Nominations must be

- (i) Written; and
- (ii) Signed by the nominee and at least 1 member; and
- (iii) If the nominee is an authorised representative
State the name of the corporate member that the nominee represents; and
Be accompanied by a representative authority for the representative from the member; and
- (iv) given to the returning officer before nominations close.

You must be a member of the company to participate in the election of ACFA Directors.

Membership & Nomination forms can be downloaded from the ACFA Web site www.acfa.com.au

Farming and breeding systems big winners in innovation awards

Australia's sugarcane farmers 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 the 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.

Got an idea for a story?

We'd love to hear from you!

You can call us on
1800 500 025
or
email us at
Info@acfa.com.au



ACFA Chairman Ross Walker (seated), Junior Vice-Chairman Wayne Rodgers and Senior Vice-Chairman John Blanckensee

La Niña more likely than not by Dr Yvette Everingham (JCU)

In short there are three key features which favour the emergence of a La Niña later this year.

The most dominating feature is the large volume of cooler-than-average sea temperatures in the depths of the equatorial Pacific.

To help bring this cool water to the surface, easterly winds are needed. This has been witnessed with stronger-than-average easterly wind bursts occurring in recent months.

The third feature is that cooler-than-average sea temperatures have started to appear along the surface of the equatorial Pacific, sneaking in from the south western American coastline.

It comes as no surprise then, that most computer models are now predicting La Niña conditions to emerge later this year.

La Niña conditions occur when sea surface temperatures along the equatorial Pacific are cooler than normal.

For a sea surface temperature pattern to be called a La Niña, sea surface temperatures only need to be about a half to one degree (C) cooler than average in the central

equatorial Pacific.

La Niña conditions significantly increase the threat of disruption to the harvest due to wet weather, especially during the later half of the Australian harvest season for sugarcane growing regions along the east Australian coast.

Since the 1970's La Niña events have come and gone. Each La Niña has left a different rainfall footprint. Some wet, and some not so wet, but the average of these footprints points to a wetter than average harvest season.

Years when La Niña sea surface temperatures developed during the harvest season include: 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1983, 1988, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000.

As always we recommend that readers continually update the potential development of this La Niña that is now starting to gain more media attention.

For more information please visit
<http://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/SeasonalClimateOutlook/OutlookMessage/index.html> and
<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/>.

Slow start to the new year By Ginette Diaz Queensland Sugar Limited

May has been a relatively slow moving month, with the raw sugar market trading within a limited range.

The July 2007 (prompt) New York No.11 raw sugar futures contract commenced the month at US 9.14c/lb.

After the expiry of the May 2007 contract the market seemed to find it's footing with continued strength from the end users which helped the market recover, which was underpinned by a narrowing of the July / October spread.

By mid month the raws market had edged lower, weighted down by the expectation of a massive surplus ahead.

Speculators made attempts to push the market above the US 9.40c/lb mark but with not a lot of trading happening and persistent Producer selling, the rally was unable to gather momentum and the market fell to below US 9.00c/lb.

Towards the end of the month the New York No.11 had hit new 2 year lows at US 8.63c/lb.

This was brought on by a variety of Speculator and Producer selling, but the market rallied forward to stop any further declines with the Funds and Locals showing their support.

The prompt July 2007 New York No.11 raw sugar futures closed the month at US 8.93 c/lb at the time of writing.

The London No.5 (LDN5) white sugar August 2007 contract began the month at USD306.50 per tonne.

The white sugar market started to follow a similar story to the raws market, where physical tightness is helping to support the front contract months.

Trade buying, short covering by the Funds and small Speculators pushed the whites market up USD21.90 per tonne higher in the half of the month.

The whites market continued to benefit in the second half due to strong demand in the spot market and the turn around in the raws market encouraged buyers back into the market.

The London No.5 (LDN5) white sugar August 2007 contract increased a further 6.60 to close the month at USD335.00 per tonne at the time of writing.

The prompt May 2007 New York No.11 raw sugar futures contract delivered 223,000mt (4,395 lots) against expiry on the 30th April 2007 to 2 receivers Sucden (1,677 lots) 85,090mt and ED&F Man (2,718 lots) 137,910mt.

Brazil was the deliverer of the sugar with 89,099mt from Brazil Santos, 129,842mt from Brazil Paranagua and 4,059mt from Honduras.

Heavy rains in the CS Brazil have halted crushing in some parts of the region, with more rain expected for the following week.

Some parts of CS Brazil have received more rain in the last 24 hours than they typically do in the whole month of May.

While the rain may have stopped harvesting, it has aided the crop as the region has been experiencing a water deficit.

Apart from the rain all 265 mills are in operation throughout the CS region.

The AUD increased due to an increase in oil and commodity prices in the US to close at AUD/USD 0.8231 at the time of writing.

The Better Manager Series... Managing Ill and Injured Employees Part 2

Article provided by McKays Consulting, a division of McKays Solicitors

When managing an ill or injured employee, a manager has to consider:

- The needs of the individual
- Business morale
- A complex web of legislative protections for injured workers.

This is the second article of a two part series on managing ill or injured employees in Workchoices workplaces in Queensland. In the first edition we explained:

- The general law of managing ill and injured employees
- Work related incapacity
- Non-work related incapacity
- Rehabilitation and redeployment.

Please contact us if you did not receive the first edition.

In this article we explain:

- Discrimination and injury management
- Information gathering and decision making.

Discrimination and Injury Management

The Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination for “impairment”, defined as:

“...the partial loss of a person's bodily functions... the malfunction of a person's body... or... a condition, illness or disease that impairs a person's thought process, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour.”

An employer is exempted from liability if:

- The discrimination was for restrictions relating to genuine occupational requirements.
- Not permitting the discrimination would cause the employer unjustifiable hardship.
- The discrimination was needed to protect health and safety in the workplace.
- The discrimination was necessary to comply with other legislation or a Court order.

Information Gathering and Decision Making

Having determined whether the injury is work related and having complied with its statutory obligations, the employer must obtain reliable medical evidence.

In so doing, the employer:

- Should rely on medical advice ideally a report from a medical specialist.
- Can direct the employee to see a

medical specialist of the employer's choosing.

- Must have the employee's written authority for the medical specialist to release information to the employer.
- Should give a letter of request to the doctor stating the issues for which the employer needs advice.

The medical report may clearly advise whether the employee will be fit to return to work.

Sometimes a report might say the employee is not yet fit, but is likely to regain capacity.

The employer should consider allowing more time for the employee to recover, especially if the employee's absence is not causing severe hardship to the employer.

Summary

We have only been able to introduce the law of managing ill and injured employees.

Each case needs to be considered on its own facts.

With care, appropriate medical advice, and good legal advice, an employer can significantly reduce its legal risk.

What's going on in the sugar regions?

Mossman/Mulgrave Regional Report

A relatively dry May saw falls range from 150mm at Miallo to only 50mm in Julatan.

Recent showers halted planting though should boost tonnage expected to be between 15 and 20 per cent better than last year.

Mossman and Mulgrave mills plan to commence crushing on June 18.

Tableland Mill commenced crushing on May 21 and crushed 23,060 tonnes for a weekly CCS at 10.71.

Don Murday
ACFA Northern Region Director

Innisfail Regional Report

On the coast unwanted rain has again stopped pre-season planting in most districts from Tully through to Gordonvale.

Recently there was figures in area between 100 and 160 mls in the wet tropics.

The Innisfail district crush is expected to start on June 26.

Innisfail and Bundaberg recently had their annual productivity awards night and I extend my congratulations to those who won awards.

No smut has been reported so far in the Northern area.

John Blanckensee
ACFA Northern Director

Herbert Regional Report

I have great pleasure in writing my first report as a new Director for Australian Cane farmers' Association in the Herbert region.

I wish to thank Dawn Brown on behalf of the Herbert Region for the effort she made as a Director for the time she was in there.

Dawn has accepted the role of Secretary for the Branch and Ian Kemp is the newly elected Chairman with Mark Governato taking on the role of Deputy Chairman.

Last week was the Annual Forum for Australian Cane farmers Association.

The Conference was held in the Burdekin and was a special event because it was a Century since the Australian Sugar Producers Association as it was previously known came into being.

The future of the industry looks bright with lots of innovative ideas coming out of CSIRO and other groups.

It just remains to be seen whether we can all hang in there long enough to see some light at the end of the tunnel. An income below the cost of production is totally unacceptable as farmers have not recovered from the last down turn.

The crushing season looks set to start around the 16th June.

Farmers are busy preparing the ground for planting with some farmers having planted.

Carol Mackee
ACFA Herbert Director

Burdekin Regional Report

The 2007 Burdekin cane harvest is due to commence on June 12th with uncertainty about the industry's future in a deregulated market with no local competition and more than 1 mt in lost production over two years.

Further crop reductions to between 7.5 and 8.12 mt are expected as a result of another late finish to the 2006 crop, despite the hectares under cane being increased from 69,997ha for the 2006 crush to 71,466ha in 2007.

The 2006 harvest was again plagued with mill breakdowns and CSR have committed to increased slack season maintenance to overcome the problems.

Disenchantment with sugar industry deregulation has continued to encourage increasing shift to alternative crops.

Alternative use of crop for an Ethanol plant has been proposed.

CSR have put in place a series of hedging/pricing meetings a month out from the season, resulting in a sceptical response.

Most of the Burdekin's early plant is completed, with the BRIA farmers commencing their planting by the second week in March and the Delta underway by early April. It is estimated that 80-90% of the early plant has been Q208A (intermediate-resistant for smut)

On another positive note, greyback grub damage is very low again this year.

Regional Reports

As the incoming Burdekin director for ACFA, I join with the sentiments articulated at the Conference in wishing retiring directors, Adrian Ivory and Dawn Brown well in their respective endeavours.

Margaret Menzel
Burdekin Region Director

Central Regional Report

Proserpine Mill statistics

Estimate for 2007: 1.85million tonnes

Start date: 26th June

Finish date: early November

Crop is down by about 5 tonnes per hectare on last season largely due to late rain.

Good rain in February and since means that crop has grown satisfactorily but not as good as the rest of the central region.

The season has not been as good as Mackay and even the latest rain that has been around favoured Mackay.

The area received approximately 50mm of rain recently and CCS is expected to be similar to last season.

The Furfural project is progressing with civil work started on site this week and fabrication of key components occurring off-site in Australia and in South Africa.

Plan is to commission in early 2008 and start full production in the 2008 season

Mackay Sugar Report

Final price for 2006 season is approximately \$367/tonne sugar which means \$37/tonne sugar to come by end of June. Pleystowe mill commences operation on June 14 with Racecourse, Marian and Farleigh to commence from June 18 onwards.

The estimate is for 6.5mt with the initial advance price at \$200/tonne sugar paying \$16/tonne cane at 12.5 PRS.

Mackay Sugar has priced some tonnage for the coming season, well above current prices in the long term pool, for those farmers who choose to participate.

Plane Creek starts on June 26 with an estimate of 1.435 million tonnes (1.419 mt last year).

Shed meetings are scheduled prior to commencement of crushing.

ACFA is now a member of the Central Region Sugar Group.

Finally I would like to thank outgoing Director Paul McKay for his contribution and support.

Ross Walker
ACFA Chairman

Southern Region Report

Bundaberg Sugar is harvesting its own cane at the moment.

Bundaberg sugar suppliers should start crushing on June 18. The Isis is expected to start in early July.

There has been no rain of significance since the last report.

Blocks are deteriorating from dry weather; however, the CCS should be higher than normal but we are looking for rain to stabilise the weight component of the cane.

The crop is expected to be 20 per cent down from last year.

The Smut in Childers is spreading rapidly because of the dry environment.

There should be enough varieties throughout the district to avert significant yield loss if we move towards using them now.

I predict that if we do that there will be minimal losses.

Farmers are concerned about lack of Government support for ethanol.

Errol Zunker
Southern Region Branch Secretary

New South Wales Regional Report

Unseasonal conditions have prevailed with estimates reflecting this in a lower than expected tonnage for the NSW industry for this season.

The dry conditions have a lot of farmers in the frost prone areas concerned as this could lead to a increased chance of frosts.

At the time of going to print the start times for the three mill areas is as follows, Harwood to be the first mill to commence in early June, Broadwater mid June and Condong early July.

Wayne Rodgers
New South Wales Director

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Truss launches FTA policy guide

The Minister for Trade, Warren Truss, has released a new booklet that outlines the Australian Government's policy on free trade agreements (FTAs).

Mr Truss released Free Trade Agreements: A Guide to Australia's Policy at the 2007 launch of the Australian Export Awards in Sydney.

"The booklet summarises the Australian Government's approach to FTA negotiations and uses case studies to illustrate how Australian companies of all sizes are benefiting from Australia's existing FTAs.

"More than 60 per cent of Australia's trade is with our FTA partners – those countries with which we have or are negotiating an FTA," Mr Truss said.

Australia has already negotiated FTAs with New Zealand (1983), Singapore (2003), Thailand (2005) and the United States (2005). Australia has also started negotiations with ASEAN (together with New Zealand), Malaysia, China, the Gulf Cooperation Council and Japan. The negotiating process has also begun with Chile and Korea.

Mr Truss re-iterated that achieving a successful outcome of the Doha Round of talks remains the Australian Government's top trade priority. However, FTAs clearly have an important complementary role to play.

"FTAs open up export markets and create opportunities for Australian businesses. The booklet, Free Trade Agreements: A Guide to Australia's Policy, explores these opportunities.

"While the World Trade Organization (WTO) sets the rules for world trade and is the key to keeping export markets open around the world, FTAs deliver real commercial gains with individual countries faster than can be negotiated in the WTO, which has more than 150 members. FTAs also tackle issues not covered in the WTO."

Mr Truss said the proliferation of FTAs around the world means that Australia must also negotiate free trade agreements – or risk our competitors getting preferential access to our export markets.

"Our bottom line is that FTAs should deliver commercial benefits to Australian consumers and businesses across all sectors of trade. FTAs should also act as a building block for trade liberalisation through the WTO.

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