

the Australian Cane Farmer

ACFA and PCGO true industry pioneers

The Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA) and Pioneer Cane Growers Organisation (PCGO) have recently signed an historic agreement empowering the two companies to work together on issues of mutual interest.

ACFA and PCGO have much in common; for example, a passionate support for farmer equity in diversification projects, and at the moment, especially biofuel projects.

ACFA has much to offer from an industry-wide perspective and PCGO has exceptional ability in its regional services and expertise.

PCGO Chairman Geoff Cox said that PCGO and the ACFA had very similar goals and could work together for mutual gain.

Both organisations will continue to work autonomously in the manner which ACFA has encouraged for years, while sharing information, lobbying and support.

ACFA Chairman, Ross Walker encourages other local farmer representative groups to consider a similar alliance with the ACFA.

“By working together we show a powerful and united voice which can only be beneficial when interacting with government.”

Mr Walker praised the agreement calling it a positive step forward for the industry.

“This agreement is a major milestone in the existence of ACFA,” he said.

“It is a glowing endorsement of our policies and sign that farmers are beginning to abandon the more archaic elements of the industry’s past and are embracing the future.”

“On behalf of ACFA I would like to welcome PCGO Chairman Geoff Cox, Deputy Chairman Michael Hoey and Directors John DeZolt, Dean Sgroi and Colin Hunter to the alliance.

“I look forward to working with you to formulate meaningful and effective policy that will advance the sugar industry into the future.

“This alliance will ensure that the independent voice of the Australian cane farmer is strengthened and will carry even greater weight in future industry discussions,” said Mr Walker.

The Pioneer Cane Growers Organisation came into being during 2005 when they split from the Queensland Cane Growers Organisation.

PCGO serves farmers who supply cane to Pioneer Mill in the Burdekin.

ACFA is the only national cane farmer organisation that is independent from an alliance with the milling sector.

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Nov/Dec 2007

Volume 7, Issue 9

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Breaking News

Smut has been detected in Maryborough.

The discovery was made by a farm worker applying fertiliser on a property west of Maryborough, who found three stools of cane infected with the disease.

Smut spores have been found in the air in Maryborough; however, this is the first infected crop that has been found in the area.



Leading farmers into the future

ACFA and Pioneer Cane Growers form beneficial alliance



By ACFA.
Chairman
Ross Walker.

Alliance with Pioneer Cane Growers Organisation

I'm very pleased to announce an alliance between ACFA and the Pioneer Cane Growers Organisation (PCGO).

The alliance has been formed after discussions between myself and PCGO Chairman Mr Geoff Cox.

The alliance has been ratified by both boards and a closer working relationship will benefit both organisations and their members.

PCGO has been independent and progressive since breaking away from the Queensland Cane Growers Organisation.

PCGO's approach to cane supply agreements, diversification, and the way forward for farmers fits well with ACFA's philosophy and approach.

The alliance will result in a free

exchange of information and a combined and resolute approach to achieve improved outcomes for our members.

I welcome the board and management of PCGO and their substantial membership to this alliance and I look forward to working with them.

Australian Sugar Industry Alliance

I have previously mentioned the formation of the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASIA) and how secretive and non-transparent the whole process has been.

It is after all purporting to be a 'whole of industry' alliance.

I've already said how politics sadly played a major role which resulted in ACFA being excluded from the process.

ACFA has recently received an invitation to join ASIA as an Associate member.

Associates are not entitled to:

1. The rights and privileges of a member

2. Receive notice of a general meeting
3. Vote at a general meeting
4. Hold office in the company

ACFA must be invited as a Sugar Industry Body member, the same as applies to QCGO and ASMC.

The ACFA board has rejected Associate membership and will only be a part of ASIA on equal terms with the mentioned Sugar Industry Body members.

When will some in the industry learn about democracy and democratic principals?

Federal Election

The election of the Federal Labor Government will see an emphasis on climate change and renewable energy which should result in an expansion of cogeneration of electricity and ethanol production in the sugar industry.

An emissions trading scheme will start in 2010 and increasing the renewable energy target to 20% by 2020 will see an additional 45,000 gigawatt hours of renewable

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ASIA fails the fairness test

The Australian Sugar Industry Alliance Limited (ASIA) was formed on 18 September 2007 as Australian Public Company, Limited by Guarantee.

Invitation

In a letter dated 12 October 2007, ASIA joint Secretaries, Max Craigie and Ian Ballantyne wrote to ACFA introducing ASIA as follows;

'The vision of the company is to promote and advance the development of a vibrant, sustainable and self-reliant raw sugar and sugarcane derived products industry.'

'The mission is to be an effective and united forum for the development and promotion of policy advancing the commercial development of the Australian sugar industry through engagement with government, industry, service providers, community and other stakeholders and providing leadership to advance sugar industry self-reliance sustainability and viability.'

'The inaugural meeting of Directors took place on 19 September. Ian McMaster was elected Chairman and Alf Cristaudo was elected Deputy Chairman. The other Directors are Chris Connors, Geoff Mitchell, Joe Russo and Paul Schembri. Ian Ballantyne and Max Craigie are joint Company Secretaries.'

The Board immediately established two committees: a 'Trade and International Relations Committee' and a 'Research Committee'.

Membership rejected

The ACFA was offered associate membership but declined deciding that the ACFA could only agree to be a 'Sugar Industry Body' member. The reason is plain.

The ACFA is an official industry representative body and its participation in the Australian sugar industry should remain as such. ACFA members should be represented in ASIA on equal footing with members of ASMC and Canegrowers.

Origin of ASIA

The Hon. Peter McGauran MP, Federal Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and forestry and the Hon. Tim Mulherin MP Qld Minister for Primary Industries met with the Chairmen and General Managers of Canegrowers and ASMC on 21 July 2006 to discuss the establishment of a Sugar

Industry Leadership Group.

On 5 March 2007, Canegrowers and ASMC submitted a joint letter to the Hon. Peter McGauran MP, Federal Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. The letter contained a 'Heads of Agreement' outlining a Joint Commitment to Leadership'.

The 'Heads of Agreement' states that;

'The ministers considered that:

'- It is appropriate that the ongoing informal but cohesive relationship that has developed in recent years between Canegrowers and ASMC be formalised by establishing an industry council; and
Continued on page 4...

Chairman's comment

...from previous page

electricity produced up from the current 15,000 gigawatt hours national production. There should be opportunities for both farmers and millers to participate in this expansion.

ACFA will be closely monitoring the \$200 million Great Barrier Reef Rescue Plan which includes investing \$146 million in a new water quality grants scheme.

The scheme will provide matching grants to landholders in reef catchments for land management practices which improve farm productivity and reduce loss of nutrients and sediments.

ACFA Board Meeting

At a recent Board meeting in Brisbane the board was addressed by speakers from QSL, BSES, SRDC and AON Insurance.

The future direction of QSL and STL will be closely monitored by ACFA because of their utmost importance to the industry.

Farmers need to be taking great interest in the future of both companies.

With the festive season upon us, I would like to thank members for their continued support and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

ASIA fails the fairness test

...continued from page 3

'- Government would encourage the establishment of such a council and be willing to more directly engage with it in preference to other bodies and interest groups, provided it was sufficiently representative of industry.'

Recent developments

The ASIA Research Committee and the ASIA Trade Committee met for the first time on Monday 12 November 2007.

The ASIA Board then met for the second time during the following week on Tuesday 20 November and admitted the following bodies as Associate Members:

Queensland Sugar (QSL)
BSES Limited
Sugar Research & Development Corporation (SRDC)
Canegrowers Mossman
Canegrowers Burdekin
Canegrowers Maryborough

The Secretariat was to write to regions and provide additional information about the purpose of the Alliance and the importance of establishing regional sugar industry body leadership groups.

The ACFA has been informed that several north Queensland mills and the entire New South Wales industry have declined membership in ASIA.

ACFA Chairman, Ross Walker said that ASIA cannot claim to be representative with its inequitable membership structure. Effectively ASMC and Canegrowers control ASIA because the existence of Sugar Industry Regional Body members relies totally on ASMC and Canegrowers, whose nominees control the inaugural board.

The rest of the industry bodies and stakeholders can only enter upon invitation as associates or affiliates and with virtually no rights.

Their role can be little more than to 'legitimise' the organisation - a poor attempt at being 'sufficiently representative of industry' as deemed requisite by the Federal and Queensland governments.

Unfortunately the industry has missed a golden opportunity to demonstrate an ability to act in a mature manner, with fairness and thereby gaining credibility.

ASIA: A Closer Look

Membership structure

Classes (5.1)

Sugar Industry Body: this can only be ASMC and Canegrowers.

Sugar Industry Regional Body: a body incorporated within Australia to specifically represent the interests of cane growers, sugar millers and others interested in promoting and advancing the sugar industry within a region.

Admission to membership (5.2): Board has absolute discretion.

Associates (5.3):

- A person connected with the industry but does not qualify for membership.
- Board has absolute discretion.

Associates are not entitled to:

1. the rights and privileges of a member.
2. receive notice of a general meeting.
3. vote at a general meetings; and
4. hold office in the company.

Affiliates (5.4):

- A person who does not qualify for membership.

Affiliates are not entitled to:

1. the rights and privileges of a member.
2. receive notice of a general meeting.
3. vote at a general meetings; and
4. hold office in the company.

Directors (12.1)

Minimum of 6 Directors.

Maximum of 10 Directors.

6 Elected by members

Up to 4 appointed by Elected Directors.

Appointment of elected directors (12.4)

Member Canegrowers may elect one director.

ASIA fails the fairness test

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Member ASMC may elect **one director**.

Each Sugar Industry Regional Body member may elect **one director**.

If there are not four Sugar Industry Regional Body Directors, Member Canegrowers and Member ASMC are entitled to fill vacancies.

Member Canegrowers and Member ASMC must maintain an equal number of directors.

Appointment of Appointed Directors (12.5)

The Elected Directors may at any time appoint up to four Appointed Directors.

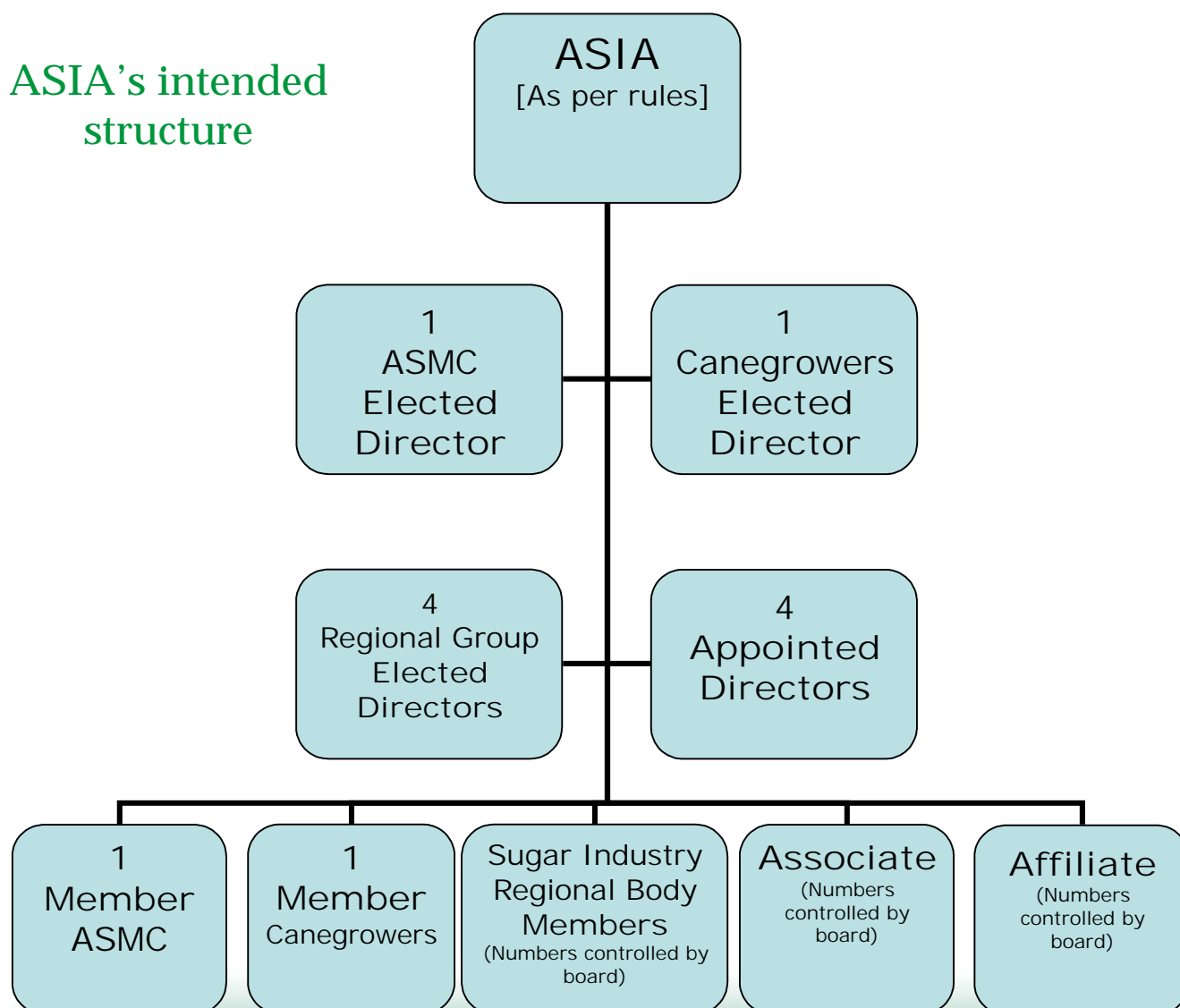
An Appointed director may be removed at any time by a majority decision by the Elected Directors.

Election of Chairman

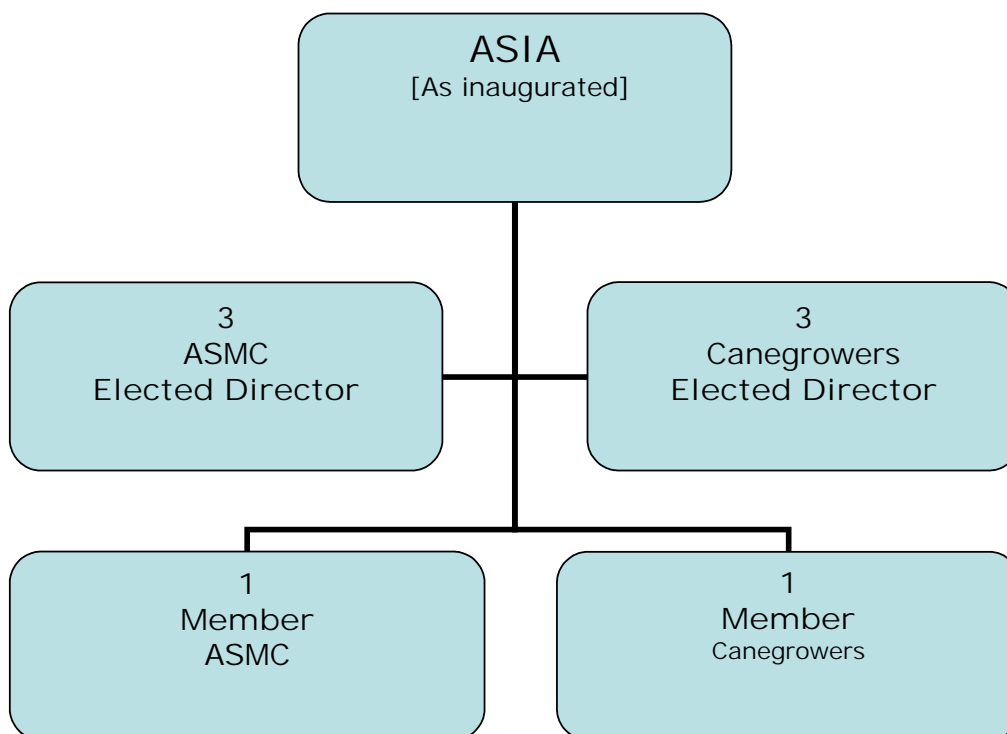
Chairman must be an Elected Director

Position must alternate at each AGM between an Elected Director elected by member Canegrowers and an Elected

ASIA's intended structure



ASIA's inaugural structure



Labor's plans for agriculture

Labor's plan to dump the 'Advancing Australian Agriculture' (AAA) FarmBis program is bad news for Australian cane farmers.

The FarmBis program has provided vital business and environmental training to over 150,000 farm businesses and has been an important component in not only in helping farmers adapt to climate change, but also helped farmers improve their environmental practices and thereby reduce farming's impact on the environment.

The Reef Rescue Plan that was put forward may pick up some of the shortfall left from the abolition of FarmBis. The key components for the \$200 million package are:

- The \$146 million 'Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Grants Program' which will provide matching grants to landowners and managers in reef catchments for land management practices which improve far m productivity and reduce loss of nutrients and sediments and;
- The \$10 million 'Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Research and Development Program' which is a competitive research

funding program aimed at improving understanding of the link between land management practices and environ mental impacts and will lead to the development and application of new water-quality monitoring techniques for nutrient, chemical and sediments.

A Rudd Labor Government will set a 20 per cent Renewable Energy Target for Australia to reach by 2020.

Federal Labor's 20 per cent Renewable Energy Target will ensure that the equivalent of at least 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply is generated fro m renewable sources by 2020.

To achieve this, Federal Labor will increase the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target from 30,000 to 45,000 gigawatt hours (GWh) per year.

Labor has also committed to continuing Exceptional Circumstance assistance but has warned farmers they will not use it to artificially support farmers that aren't viable in the long term.

SRDC group innovation projects help farmers

SRDC Grower Group Innovation Projects help farmer and harvester groups conduct research and development activities suited to their local conditions.

Here are some projects where like-minded people, sharing a passion for the future of the sugarcane industry, are working together to provide solutions to harvesting issues.

Harvesting - Taking the Wide Angle

Those tinkering away in the shed or leaning on the fence scratching their heads about how to adapt to a controlled traffic farming system (CTFS) will be pleased to know that SRDC is funding several projects designed to solve these cane cutting conundrums.

Up in the Burdekin, Joe Linton and the Advance Burdekin Collective have developed a simple, but highly effective, ram-operated adjustable BSES front that allows the operator to harvest any type of row configuration.

Potential cost savings from controlled traffic, minimum tillage and wider rows were the catalyst for the group to apply for the SRDC grower group innovation funding.

With the pull of a lever, the front adjusts easily from cutting conventional 1.5 metre wide rows to a two-metre mode.

EHS Engineering at Mackay developed and designed the conversion with the end result being a simple, robust hydraulic ram system that enables adjustment in just seconds to suit any row width.

Local harvester Trevor Pardon estimates that dual row paddocks are now 70 per cent easier to cut because the machine is sitting better in the drill.

Thanks to the work of this group, all operators of older harvesters now have the ability to upgrade their machines to handle various row widths during the period when growers are gradually switching to wider rows a solution far more cost effective than buying new equipment.



Joe Linton and the modified harvester front.

Elevator to Success

How to fill bins with cane efficiently when working in wider rows has been keeping Brian Stevens and the Plane Creek Sustainable Farmers at Sarina occupied for the past couple of years.

But, with some team trial-and-effort, this grower group has masterminded a solution.

Recognising that an elevator extension to suit 1.8 metre row width harvesting was needed, initial investigation proved that extending the whole elevator or attaching a bolt-on extension was unsuitable because the increase in weight made the machine unstable and dangerous,

Continued on page 8...

SRDC group innovation projects help farmers



H.E.L.P. data recording system.

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caused more wear and tear on parts, and did more soil compaction damage.

Several elevator modifications were tested for weight, safety, stability, ease of use, compaction control, multi-width row use, cane loss, maintenance and durability, and cost.

Powered paddles met the majority of the criteria.

The group showed that the secondary extractor needed to be tipped back using a wedge insert to avoid cane loss when using the powered paddle.

These modifications have been adopted by several harvester operators who have visited Plane Creek to see the work of this group.

A Ripple of Change

The Ripple Creek Harvesting Group is leading a revolution.

This group, led by Anthony Girgenti from Sugarcane H.E.L.P. Services, believes it's time for a change and they've targeted the harvesting payment system.

The purpose of this harvesting group project was to help farmers change to an incentive pricing system that relates to their farm efficiency.

The group advocate that, by proving an economic benefit, farmers will improve their farm conditions for harvesting and hauling, which will lead to environmental benefits and an improvement in the farmer/harvester relationship.

The group set out to use a specialised data recording system, developed by Sugarcane H.E.L.P. Services, to capture data from every block harvested, which included fuel used and time spent on the farm.

The report showed growers the details for the harvester's throughput under certain conditions and told them what they needed to know to make smarter decisions and therefore save money.

The project achieved its aim to make farmers more aware of how their farms influence the efficiency of their harvest particularly a good farm layout and quality of headlands.

The group agreed that to achieve a full benefit from the project an incentive price formula needs to be agreed on; multi-row harvesting devices need to be used where applicable; and quality of headlands to delivery points and farm layouts need to be improved to reduce the cost of harvesting and hauling.

By using a cooperative and systematic approach to this project, potential triple-bottom line benefits for the industry were clearly demonstrated, which is sure to inspire further research and development in this area.

Harvesting Efficiency

While some projects are concentrating on harvester modifications, in the Herbert, Bremerside harvesting

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SRDC group innovation projects help farmers

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contractor and farmer Brian Tabone and the Tabone Harvesting Group 131 used an SRDC-funded harvester group project to conduct harvester efficiency trials over two years.

Put simply, the project set out to demonstrate how a whole-of-system change can reduce harvesting costs.

The group's goal for harvester efficiency was to 'maintain optimal harvester throughput that delivers the best quality and most efficient job given any particular circumstance'.

The group identified limitations to harvester efficiency, which included: farm layout and row

direction, crop condition, paddock presentation, distance from a siding and the number of rows per hectare.

They noted that conditions that promote efficient harvesting include: spacious, well maintained headlands; smooth cross drains; crop yields of 100 135 tonnes/hectare; harvest planning; and reduced turnarounds.

The group used three parameters to measure harvester efficiency: throughput, tonnes/engine hour, and fuel/tonne.

The system was tested on a dual-row configuration on a two-metre bed, with the rows set 60 centimetres apart on raised bed, with the next drill at 140 centimetres.

The project did not yield conclusive results as many don't for a number of reasons, including two very different weather conditions for harvesting, and two different data collection methods.

However, their recommendations and observations included: the need to pursue reform in harvester payments; the benefit of GPS and precision agriculture technology in harvesting; several ideas for harvester modification for wider rows; and the need to continue to collect data, recognise trends and embrace a more efficient system.

Throughout the project, these farmers-turned-researchers discovered enough and believe enough to continue the journey.

Sugar Surplus Weighs On Prices

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The ICE11 March 2008 (prompt) raw sugar futures contract commenced the month of October at US 10.15 c/lb.

Prices traded within the month of October with a range of US 9.59 10.50 c/lb.

During the first part of the month, the ICE11 declined with the news that the Brazilian harvest was doing well. In the second half of the month, the March 2008 contract surged upwards to a three month high of US 10.50 c/lb on the back of strong buying due to rising gold and oil prices combined with a weaker USD.

The March 2008 contract was unable to remain at these highs due to the looming global surplus of around 10 million metric tonnes, largely the result of Indian over-production during the recently commenced harvest campaign.

The ICE11 March 2008 raw sugar futures eventually settled at US 9.98 c/lb on the 31st October 2007, a 17 point decrease on the beginning of month.

The London No. 5 (LDN5) white sugar December 2007 contract (prompt) began the month at USD282.20 per tonne.

Producer pressure in the early part of the month weakened the December 2007 contract, with large scale selling capping any advance made.

Prices strengthened moderately over the course of the second fortnight, with surging crude oil and gold prices helping to sustain the momentum.

The LDN5 white sugar December 2007 contract closed the month at USD283.60, an increase of USD1.40.

Sugar Surplus Weighs On Prices

Reproduced with permission from Queensland Sugar Limited

The Russian government has finally approved the long-awaited seasonal sugar import duty, which will come into effect this December.

The December to May import duty will range between USD 220 270 per metric tonne, and will be scaled to the monthly average price in New York.

If Russia joins the World Trade Organisation, the duty will be

withdrawn to comply with WTO legislation.

Oil and gold prices reached all-time highs in the month of October, reaching USD 95.28 per barrel and USD 794.70 per ounce respectively.

These price highs were the consequence of ongoing geopolitical concerns in the Middle East.

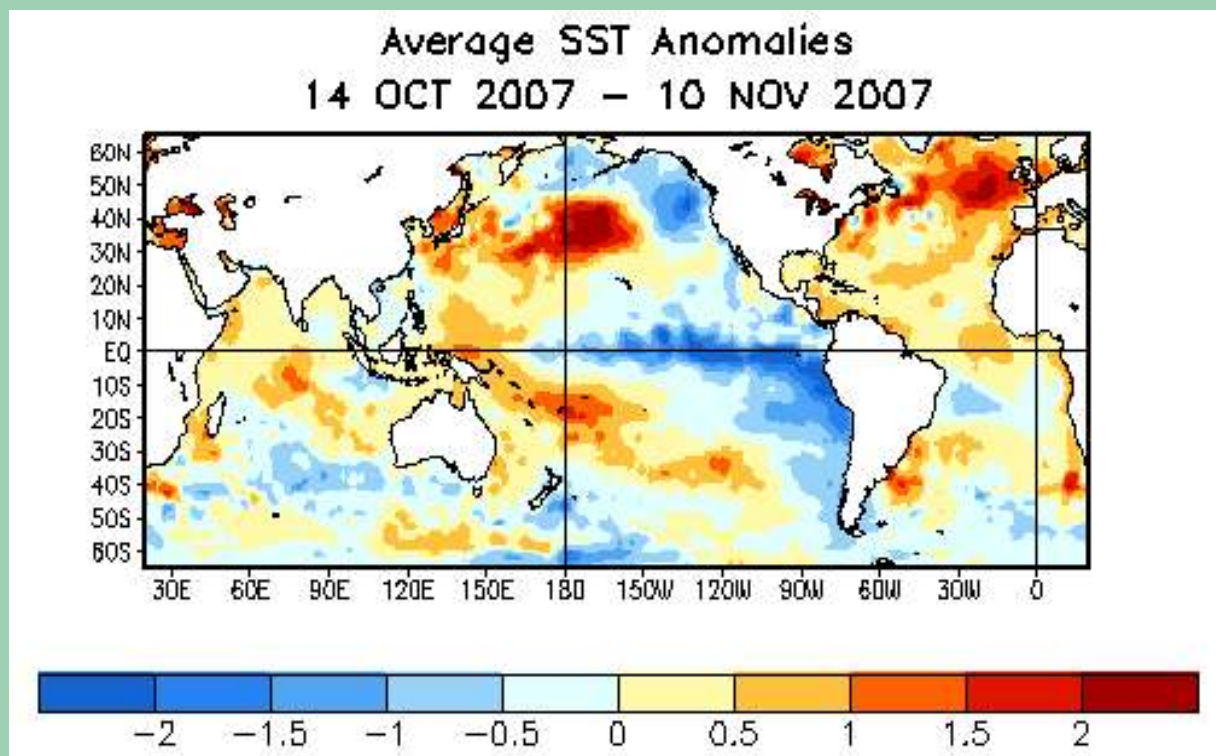
The Australian dollar (AUD) started the month at 0.8858 against the United States dollar (USD).

The AUD continued to strengthen over the course of the month, and reached a 23-year high of US 0.9343, as sub-prime concerns continued to weaken the USD.

The AUD was trading at AUD/USD 0.9138 at the time of writing.

It's official, La Niña

by Yvette Everingham (JCU)



It's official, La Niña

by Yvette Everingham (JCU)

Southern Oscillation Index & 'SOI Phase'

data source: Department of Primary Industries, Toowoomba.

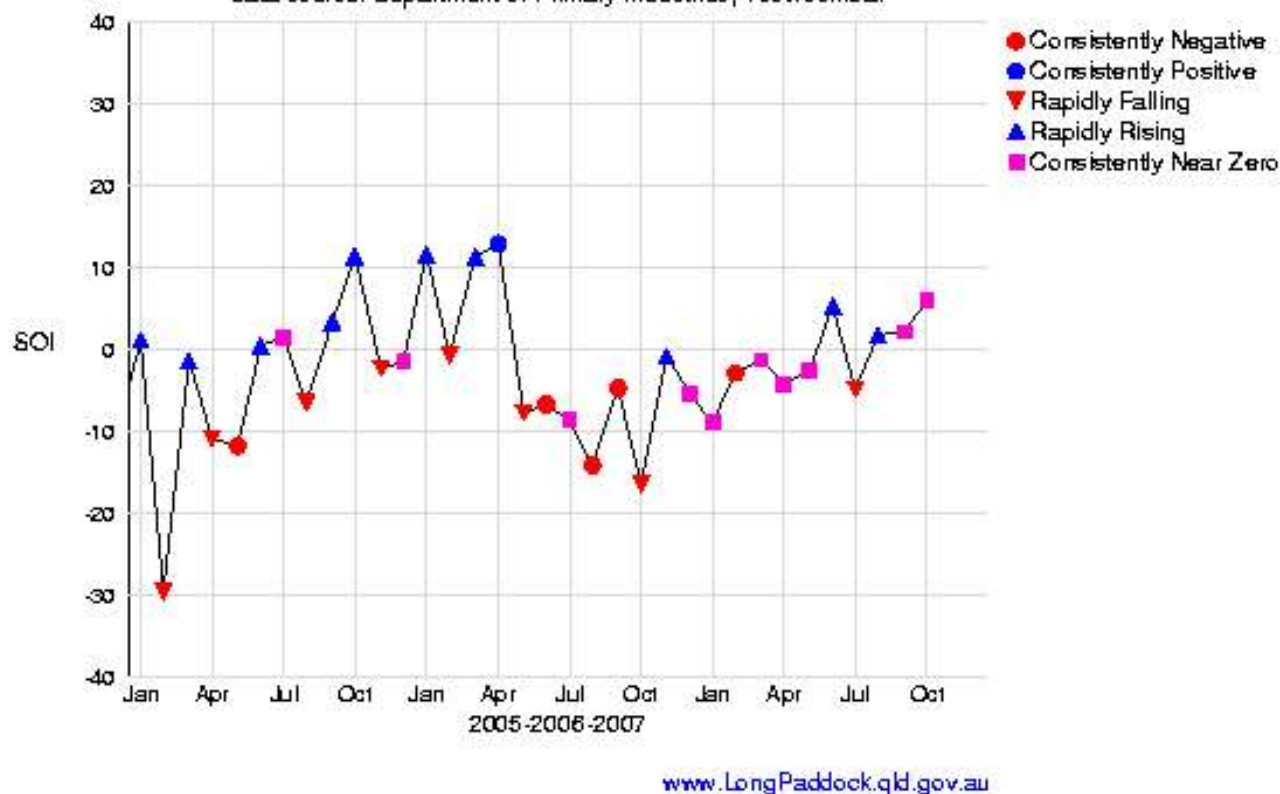


Figure 2: Trends in monthly SOI data.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology have officially declared the sea surface temperature pattern in the Pacific Ocean to be a La Nina.

Figure 1, shows the cooler than average SST pattern in the Pacific observed for October to November. Strong La Nina patterns would also have warmer sea temperatures anomalies over northern Australia and strong positive SOI values. Since July, the SOI has steadily increased and as at the 13/11/07, the 30 day average for the SOI stands at 6.3.

If we examine rainfall patterns across the sugar regions every time a La Nina was experienced, whilst some seasons have experienced dry harvest conditions, most seasons have been wetter than average.

Within any one season however, we do not know

which way the coin will land, and this harvest season there was much concern raised about the impact this La Nina may have on the harvest.

Indeed, the harvest got off to a wet start, and most locations have had relative few rain interruptions for a La Nina year.

Most rainfall in recent months has fallen in South East Queensland and North Eastern NSW. As the harvest wraps up, we will keep our fingers crossed that this is one of those years where a La Nina has a minimal impact, history would favour a wetter end to the harvest along with a wetter than average growing period.

Strategic Issues for Individual Contracts Part 2

Article provided by McKays Consulting, a division of McKays Solicitors

Welcome to the latest edition of the McKays Consulting newsletter, continuing our "Better Manager" series.

Strategic Issues for Individual Contracts Part 2

As explained in our last newsletter, most employers who see us to review their employment arrangements are concerned about:

- Staff retention issues... quality staff being poached by very big business, usually the mines
- Training costs "thrown away" when staff leave
- Personality clashes in the workplace

Rather than:

- Union interference, eg. union officials taking liberties with right of entry entitlements
- Strikes and unauthorised stop work meetings
- Difficulty negotiating terms and conditions with staff
- Difficulty meeting the wages bill because of a downturn in work.

A well worded employment contract can be a huge help to an employer to address the challenges in its workplace.

In this edition we give six practical tips to improve your employment contracts.

Tip 1 Uncertainty = Unhappiness

Many employment arrangements are unwritten or are poorly written. In a misguided effort to "keep things simple", employers even multinational employers neglect to clearly specify in writing hugely important issues such as:

- Is the employment casual or permanent?

· The notice period to end the employment. A Queensland Court implied a nine months termination notice period for a Senior Executive whose employer, Fisher and Paykel, had failed to specify a notice period in the employment contract.

· Confidentiality obligations

· If allowances and overtime are included in, or paid in addition to, the hourly rate.

Remember, anything not covered by the employment contract is usually construed in favour of the employee.

Tip 2 Beware the Handshake Agreement

Never make promises to employees that you, as an employer, are not prepared to put in writing in the employment contract. Pre-contractual promises are often legally binding!

Tip 3 It's all in the Name... Describe the Position Title

Which employer hasn't had to assuage the feelings of a new employee, and his/her co-workers because of lack of clarity to the position title of a new employee?

By including the position title in the employment contract you are forced to think through the position title and its implications for your other staff.

Tip 4 Describe the Job

Incredibly, most employers do not have job descriptions for their employees!

First we have to dispel the myth that job descriptions lock employers into inflexibility and inability to vary the work duties for the employee. Simply write into the job description, "the employer may vary the employee's work duties from time to time in accordance with the employer's requirements."

Continued over page...

Strategic Issues for Individual Contracts Part 2

Article provided by McKays Consulting, a division of McKays Solicitors

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A well worded job description is about the most important part of a good employment contract. It allows the employer to state its expectations upfront, and the employer is well positioned to take disciplinary action if the employee doesn't meet those expectations. The upside is that your best employees will remember the job expectations and strive to exceed them!

A job description should:

- Be attached to the employment contract.
- Clearly state the employee's duties.
- Clearly state the standard to which the duties are to be done. Be specific and give concrete examples where possible.
- State any important limits of authority, eg not to incur expenses above \$500.00 on company accounts.
- Specify to whom the employee will report.

Tip 5 Reserve your Rights to Recover Your Financial Investment in a New Employee

Many employers are paying:

- relocation expenses of up to \$20,000.00 to attract employees from overseas or interstate,
- training and certification expenses upwards of \$10,000.00 before a new employee is productive.

To protect its investment, an employer should:

- Reserve a right to insist the employee pay back some of the investment costs should the employee leave within say twelve months.
- Include in the employment contract an authority to the employer to deduct that reimbursement from remuneration payable to the employee.

A carefully worded clause can be enforced.

Tip 6 Give employment arrangements their proper priority

You place an ad, hold the interviews and then ring the best candidate (Jim) with the good news that he has the job! You quickly agree on wages... and tell him he can start on Monday.

Two weeks later you are catching up on paperwork and remember you haven't yet sent Jim a letter of appointment. You only have 15 minutes before the next job, so you pull out a letter of appointment that you used last time, handwrite a few changes, and ask your secretary to type it by tomorrow...

That is a very casual approach to a legal contract that:

- Binds you to pay \$40,000.00 (wages) or much more each year, with no end date
- Is the benchmark by which the expectations for the position are set
- You can be sued on if the relationship turns sour;

But about sums up the time and effort that most employers give to their employment arrangements.

Don't be an employer that keeps repeating its mistakes of the past. Take care to manage employee expectations and performance from the outset... by a carefully written employment contract.

For assistance at McKays Consulting

We can cost effectively review your employment agreements to ensure that all the important matters are covered and reduce the risk of expensive or embarrassing problems later...

We can also prepare an employment agreement or AWA to suit your specific needs with a new employee, and different standard agreements for your future use. *The information contained in the newsletter should not be relied upon without first consulting us and obtaining specific advice.*

What's going on in the sugar regions?

Mossman Regional Report

Storm rains are providing an excellent start to the 2008 crop.

It is hoped that farmers continue with their usual fertiliser program in this environment of low sugar prices and high fertiliser costs.

Bruce Andrews, a long time ACFA supporter has retired after 27 years on the board of Mossman Central mill and will continue farming.

ACFA wishes Bruce a happy retirement.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all farmers.

Don Murday
ACFA Mossman Director

Innisfail Regional Report

There have been good rains since the season finished and some areas ended up with hail.

The crop in general is looking exceptionally well, it is very early at this stage; however, things are looking good for 2008 season.

There have been some small beetle flights in the area and pigs are starting to pose problems in some areas too.

No Smut has been found in Innisfail as yet.

Tree plantations are taking out large tracts of good quality agricultural land by way of cane farms. Tree plantation groups have been actively buying properties again.

To this stage there has been no decision on the merger with Bundaberg and Maryborough milling divisions.

Negotiations for cane supply contracts for 2008 season and onwards have started in Innisfail and Tully areas. Meetings are being held with farmers regarding cane supply contracts in the Bundaberg Sugar and Tully areas.

I would like to wish all farmers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

John Blanckensee
ACFA Northern Director

Herbert Regional Report

Crushing in the Herbert finished with a total of 4,286,873 tonnes. The average CCS for the district was 13.8ccs. Total district area crushed was 57,158.66 hectares with an average of 74.99 tonnes per hectare.

Smut is blowing out in the Herbert with 153 farms affected so far. 306 blocks of cane have smut equating to approximately 14,00 hectares.

As expected, the varieties deemed susceptible with a rating above 6.5 are the more susceptible varieties of Q157, Q158, Q174 and Q204.

As the year draws to conclusion the farms sold out to trees are now being sprayed out and readied for planting. The consensus is that we have lost or will lose around 3,000 hectares of cane land with more to follow.

Low commodity prices are impacting upon farm management decisions by disillusioned farmers, tired of battling on low income. The indications are that there has been quite a reduction in the use of fertiliser. There is no confirmed data available at the present time.

In concluding this report. I would like to thank the Herbert River Productivity Board in particular, Ron Kerkwyck for supplying the data used.

I wish everyone the complements of the season.

May there be better times ahead with everyone having a safe, happy and healthy holiday period.
Until next year.

Carol Mackee
ACFA Herbert Director

Burdekin Regional Report

There is considerable concern amongst Burdekin cane farmers about continuing delays to the harvest and mill breakdowns, with a failure at the Townsville Bulk Sugar Terminal operations adding to the delays in the past month.

CSR representatives advise that they expect that Inkerman Mill may finish crushing about 21st December and the northern bank mills, Invicta, Pioneer and Kalamia are expected to finish on December 30.
Rain, increases to crop estimate and further factory breakdowns could impact on these proposed finishing dates.

This late finish raises concerns about the significant likelihood of standover crop and the lateness of ratoons again reducing 2008 productivity and CCS.

It is anticipated that further increases in maintenance will be invested in the CSR mills to improve the performance of both the factories and the cane transport networks for future seasons.

The seasonal CCS stands at 14.85 as at 10th November, 2007.

To date a total of 6.17 million tonnes has been crushed from a forecast crop of around 8.23 million tonnes.

Regional Reports

BSES and BPS have continued to check blocks close to where smut spores were previously detected, however to date, no evidence of the disease in cane has been found.

There appears to be quite a deal of interest in cotton, particularly in the Clare area with a dedicated cotton consultant now residing in the Burdekin.

Other diversification of cropping is also increasing throughout the district.

Cane varieties such as Q208 continue to shine and the limited data on KQ228 appears very promising.

The Burdekin Campus Australian Agricultural College has held their annual awards ceremony on 5th December to recognise the achievements of the college's students for 2007.

ACFA has been helping to participate in and sponsor the awards ceremony and will work closely with the college in the future.

I wish everyone a joyous Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Margaret Menzel
ACFA Burdekin Director

Central Regional Report

Proserpine and Mackay Sugar mills have finished crushing and Plane Creek is scheduled to finish around Christmas. Mackay Sugar's final tonnage came in at just under 6.7 million tonnes with a PRS rating of 13.7. Sugar content dropped markedly in the last week of the season.

The crop for 2008 has much potential but recent weather has been dry and we are badly in need of rain to lay the foundation for the 2008 crop.

Finally I would thank farmers for their support and wish all farmers a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Ross Walker
ACFA Central Region Director

Southern Regional Report

Crushing has finished in the Isis area. Bundaberg and Maryborough are expected to have finished by now.

Maryborough farmers have battled some of the worst conditions ever; drought, frost and rain; however, they have achieved high CCS levels.

The agglomeration of farms has continued with large mixed rural enterprises combining blocks to allow larger scale rotation of sugar cane with grain or vegetable crops.

The Bundaberg Irrigation Area has an increased water allocation to 24 per cent.

This has brought some revival of commitment to next years crop. The issue now is how do we cut the price of fertiliser?

Bulk buying is one possibility being pursued in the Isis.

Rotation crops are a necessary part of the system today as a revenue source and a cost of production reducing device for sugarcane.

A must for the New Year is a gathering of the clan to bring all Southern Region ACFA together to have a roll call and regroup.

With the rapid changes in our region and a new Federal Government this will be a necessary measure.

I would like to wish all farmers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mike Hetherington
ACFA Southern Region Director

New South Wales Report

Recent rains have slowed the crush on all three rivers.

Harwood mill is expected to finish crushing very soon if not already and both Broadwater and Condong mills at this stage are not expected to finish until after Christmas.

I would like to wish all farmers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mill Statistics as follows:-

Harwood
Tonnes crushed to date 655,376
POL to date 12.23

Broadwater
Tonnes crushed to date 644,940
POL to date 11.60

Condong
Tonnes crushed to date 368,577
POL to date 12.52

Wayne Rodgers
ACFA New South Wales Director

The Australian
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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.

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.