



DECEMBER 2013

**P2 CHAIRMAN'S
COMMENT**

**P3 GENERAL
MANAGER'S
COMMENT**

**P4 BEST
MANAGEMENT
PRACTICE (BMP)**

P6 RAINFALL

**P7 ACFA BOARD
MEETS STATE
MINISTER FOR
AGRICULTURE**

**P8 2014 THAI STUDY
TOUR**

P9 BONSUCRO WEEK

**P10 QSL IN THE FIELD
WITH NEXT GEN
FARMERS**

**P11 QSL
CELEBRATING
21 MILLION TONNES
EXCHANGED WITH
JAPAN**

P12 QSL UPDATE

P14 SRA UPDATE

P15 INDUSTRY NEWS

**P18 CANE FARMERS
UNITE FOR
MOVEMBER**

WIN AN iPad MINI

**P19 REGIONAL
REPORTS**



L to R- Hon. Andrew Powell MP, Canegrowers Chairman Paul Schembri, ACFA Chairman Don Murday & Hon. Dr John McVeigh MP at the BMP launch in Mackay.

Farmers unite under Qld BMP

In November 2012, the Newman Government funded a Best Management Practice (BMP) agreement with the sugarcane industry as part of the strategy to boost agricultural productivity and help protect the Great Barrier Reef. The ACFA supports this initiative and urged Government and the industry to ensure that the Qld BMP program is compatible with Bonsucro, the global standard of which ACFA is a member.

Environment Minister Andrew Powell signed the agreement which underpins the Government's plan to harness industry know-how with government-funded scientific research and education, to protect the reef and build a sustainable and profitable agricultural industry.

Mr Powell said balancing the needs of the complex reef ecosystem with robust and resilient agricultural production required goodwill, good practice and good support.

"This agreement is based on all three," Mr Powell said.

"Taking a best management practice approach by working with cane growers, rather than forcing them to fill in mounds of paperwork, has the potential to be more effective than regulation in protecting the Reef."

continued page 4 >

Chairman's Comment

The 2013 season has drawn to a close in most regions and after some much needed rainfall the makings of the 2014 crop, is looking promising.

On Tuesday 3 December I attended the official launch of the Smartcane BMP program. The Qld BMP has brought farmers together under a common objective; demonstrating leadership and ownership of the issue of sustainable sugarcane farming, in order to minimise negative off-farm impacts, while focusing on profitability.

The Smartcane program follows on the heels of successful BMP programs in other industries such as cotton, grain and grazing. The sugar industry has a firm view that self-regulation is the best form of regulation.

On other sustainability news, ACFA Directors Robert Quirk and Gerard Puglisi attended the Bonsucro AGM in New Orleans during Bonsucro week in November. Once again Robert represented the ACFA at the Bonsucro board meeting. The field trip included a visit to the John Deere factory to view the latest harvesters including the small, articulated harvester built for the small scale growers in India and China.

The Global Farmer Working Group has proposed a scheme where growers can be audited and certified to the Bonsucro standard, allowing them to trade certificates for the sugar they grow. We hope that this initiative will be approved in March 2014.

QSL welcomed long-standing Japanese customers Mitsui and Mitsubishi and their associated refinery representatives to Queensland recently to celebrate a significant milestone of 21 million tonnes of sugar exchanged between Australia and Japan since 1974.

The occasion was marked with an industry dinner with grower and miller representatives, and a farm and mill visit. ACFA General Manager Stephen Ryan and I were the farmer representatives at the function.

QSL noted that, 'We made our first ever sale of sugar to Japan in 1954 under the Queensland Sugar Board and the relationship gathered momentum from that point forward with regular shipments of sugar shipped from 1974 onwards.'

In other market news, Queensland Sugar Limited (QSL) has welcomed the Australian Government's announcement that Australia has concluded negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Republic of Korea, the largest buyer of Australian raw sugar.

QSL CEO Greg Beashel said that, 'QSL has supplied more than 20 million tonnes of raw sugar to the Republic of Korea during its almost 40 year business relationship.'

'Annually we sell around one million tonnes of raw sugar to the Republic of Korea. This was at risk as Australian raw sugar, in 2014, was due to be at a competitive disadvantage because it would have faced higher tariffs than its competitors.'

Wishing you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Don Murday
Chairman

General Manager's Comment



Stephen Ryan
ACFA General Manager

The Sugar Research Australia (SRA) consultation process has recorded some helpful feedback and it is pleasing but not surprising that soil health and variety development are high priorities. Other important areas that have received backing from farmers are diversification, human capacity development and research adoption/extension. The disconnection of intensive extension from our main research organisation (at the time, the former BSES), in June 2012 has not been smooth sailing and thankfully the industry is reviewing this decision.

On Friday 6 December, at the close of a busy week of company director training and leadership discussions, Next Gen participants work shopped with SRA. Leigh Clement, Manager Corporate Planning and Reporting, took Next Gen through the results to date of the SRA consultation and sought their views on RD&E priorities.

Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Barnaby Joyce has agreed to the SRA consultation plan and the Interim Strategic Plan. The SRA Board and the Minister approved the Interim Operational Plan during November 2013. The 2013/14 – 2017/18 Strategic Plan has commenced the consultation phase and is expected that it will be completed by early 2014.

Also during November, the SRA Board approved the membership application and SRA commenced its membership drive. Once SRA receives sufficient membership applications the process for Group G delegates will commence.

Delegates are provided for in the SRA constitution (13.6) and their role includes, among other things; to consider matters relating to Performance Reviews and the Sugarcane Levy; to vote to elect the SRA Director Selection Committee members; to be the direct contact and link between SRA members and SRA on numerous issues, including member feedback.

All levy-payers are invited to become members of SRA and a membership campaign has commenced. Farmers should note that while the SRA levy is compulsory, membership is not. It is important that levy-payers take the time to read the membership material from SRA and understand that if farmers wish to have a vote in SRA matters, they can only do so by completing the membership application.

A general meeting to wind up BSES Limited was held on 31 October 2013. The resolutions passed.

Wishing you all compliments of the season and a happy new year.

Stephen Ryan

General Manager

< continued from page 1

Mr Powell said the Government would support the agreement by providing funding to the cane industry for BMP system development and implementation.

The Government will also fund projects and extension activities and provide agronomic and water quality management advice.

"My department will also continue to monitor and evaluate the policy and legislative program, recognising that industries under BMP systems are responsible for benchmarking the performance of their producers," he said.

"The cane industry BMP will address soil health and plant nutrition, pests, disease, weed management and integrated water system management in reef catchments."

"The Government's support will help growers shift from regulation to an industry-led system underpinned by profitability and strong land stewardship.

"Producers will learn about science based improvements to managing nutrient and chemical run-off so they can put them into action in all high-risk areas.

"The Newman Government will support agricultural production while ensuring the reef remains one of the best managed marine protected areas in the world."

Australian Canefarmers Association Chairman Don Murday said that



ACFA Junior Vice Chair, Gerard Puglisi with ACFA Senior Vice Chair Robert Quirk at Bonsucro Week

the Qld BMP has brought farmers together under a common objective; demonstrating leadership and ownership of the issue of sustainable sugarcane farming, in order to minimise negative off-farm impacts, while focusing on profitability.

The web-based Smartcane application is a practical tool which allows access from anywhere with an internet connection. It will mostly do away with the need for double entry of records and the data will be of much greater use to farmers than a paper system.

'This BMP system is more about leadership than compliance: it is a single, integrated resource that can help cane farmers to better understand their farms and to plan better, in order to reduce loss and improve the bottom line,' said Mr Murday.

'Farmers who become Smartcane accredited, will bring together the good things they are doing and become formally recognised for it.'

'As the amount of farmers that complete the program increases, the industry can increase in confidence by demonstrating that leadership.'

Mr Murday said that Smartcane would protect the data of individuals and not pass it on to Government or third parties. It is an industry tool for farmers to voluntarily establish their credentials in a powerful yet confidential way.

Mr Murday stressed that Smartcane is totally voluntary yet would be of value to farmers from a whole of farm business management perspective.

The modules are;
Soil Health and Nutrient Management
Irrigation and Drainage Management
Weed, Pest and Disease Management
Crop Production and Harvesting Management
Farm Business Management
Natural Systems Management
Workplace Health and Safety

'The Newman Government has seen the value of getting behind cane farmers to help us tell our story and sell our credentials in a recognised and meaningful way. It is up to farmers to "put a toe in the water" and give the program a go,' Mr Murday said.

'Smartcane is a powerful resource and farmers should make good use of the government sponsored advisers in each district.'

'Farmers who are not computer experienced or who need a helping hand can rely on their local Smartcane advisor to help them complete the program'.

'The best approach is to make a start with one module and see how you go.'

Other industries have implemented BMP

The Smartcane program follows on the heels of successful BMP programs in other industries such as cotton's 'myBMP', 'Grains BMP' & 'Grazing BMP'.

What will happen to the data?

The head contractor, Canegrowers makes the following comments about the program.

The data will be owned by the sugarcane industry and will be collated to help support industry productivity, extension and R,D&E. Collated data will not identify individual farms, unless specifically requested, and will underpin industry strategy and direction, and provide indicators on progress towards meeting government policies and programs.

Aggregated at the appropriate scale, data will:

Inform the progress and success of the BMP program.

Support industry R,D&E needs, product development and training.

Support district and regional extension needs, product development and training.

Provide baseline information to support continuous improvement in meeting industry reporting requirements.

Timelines and delivery

By June 2014:

1520 growers will have completed self-assessment of BMP modules (75% of these coming from cane growing areas between Mossman to Mackay).

380 will achieve BMP recognition (75% of these coming from cane growing areas between Mossman to Mackay).

Recognised Prior Learning and professional development will be supported under the program.

http://www.canegrowers.com.au/page/Industry_Centre/bmp/

Self-regulation is the only acceptable regulation

The Qld Reef Regulations was the price of the Bligh Government canvassing 'green votes'. In 2008-09, the Qld sugar industry had not yet adopted a BMP program that farmers could claim and critics could assess. Work on practice improvement had been moving positively forward for decades and the identification of classes of practice was well advanced. Individuals and groups were doing great things for improved sustainability and water quality, yet there was no agreement on a program to standardise and recognise management practise.

Without the involvement of industry groups, the Reef Regulations would have been far more onerous than they were and the industry could have become a testing ground for radical impracticabilities.

The cotton, grain and grazing industries have learned that self-regulation is the only acceptable form of regulation.

In addition to the Qld BMP, Australian Canefarmers forges ahead with Bonsucro, the Global BMP standard for sugarcane

In April 2013, New South Wales Sugar Milling Cooperative Ltd and Manildra Harwood Sugar became the first in Australasia to become Bonsucro certified. The certification of the Cooperative's growers, its sugar milling operations and the Sugar Refinery joint venture with Manildra which operates alongside the Harwood Mill is the first certification from producer to customer in the world.

ACFA is proud of Directors Robert Quirk and Gerard Puglisi who are active in the Bonsucro administration. Robert is a founding Director and Gerard is the global cane farmer representative on the Bonsucro standards review committee.

In April Bonsucro announced a special membership category for farmers, while in September Bonsucro reached 100 members, most of whom are the largest sugar buyers and food manufacturers, globally.

What is Bonsucro?

Bonsucro is a global standard for sustainable sugarcane production

The main aim of the Bonsucro Standard is to promote measurable standards in key environmental and social impacts of sugarcane production and primary processing while recognizing the need for economic viability.

Bonsucro Vision

A sugarcane sector that is continuously improving and verified as sustainable.

Bonsucro Mission

Bonsucro fosters the sustainability of the sugarcane sector through a metric-based certification scheme and by supporting continuous improvement for members.

Bonsucro Objectives

To define globally applicable performance-based principles, criteria, indicators and standards for sugarcane production that take into account local conditions and circumstances, and that are based on a credible and transparent process that is focused on the key sustainability drivers in sugarcane production.

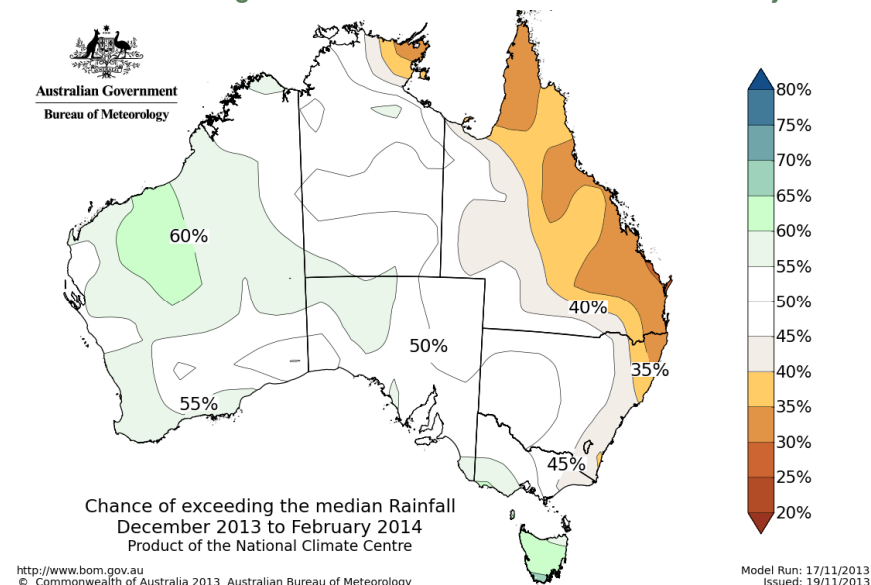
To promote measurable improvements in the key economic, environmental and social impacts of sugarcane production and primary processing.

To develop a certification system that enables producers, buyers and others involved in sugar and ethanol businesses to obtain products derived from sugarcane that have been produced according to agreed, credible transparent and measurable criteria.

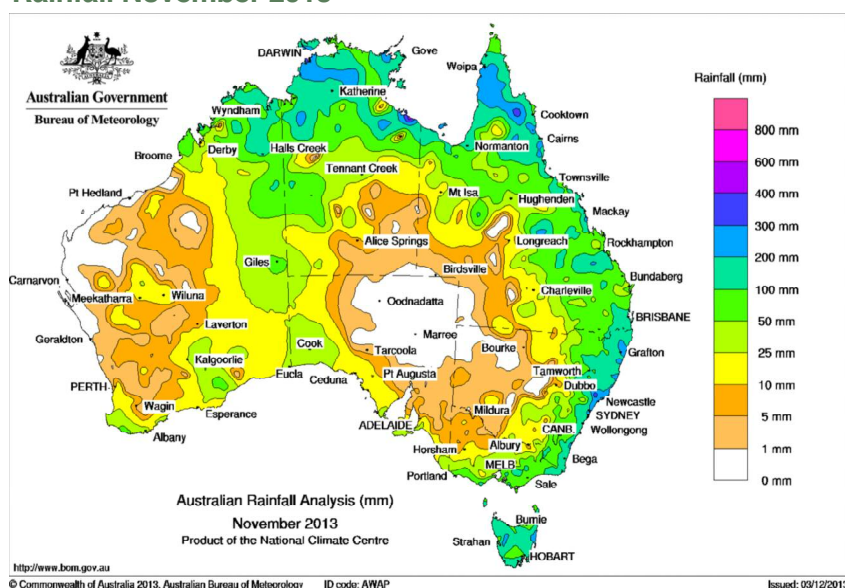
To support the transition of Bonsucro to an internationally accepted global platform for sugarcane and its derived products, which is financially self-sustaining and which provides a forum for continuous improvement in production efficiency and sustainability.

<http://bonsucro.com/site/>

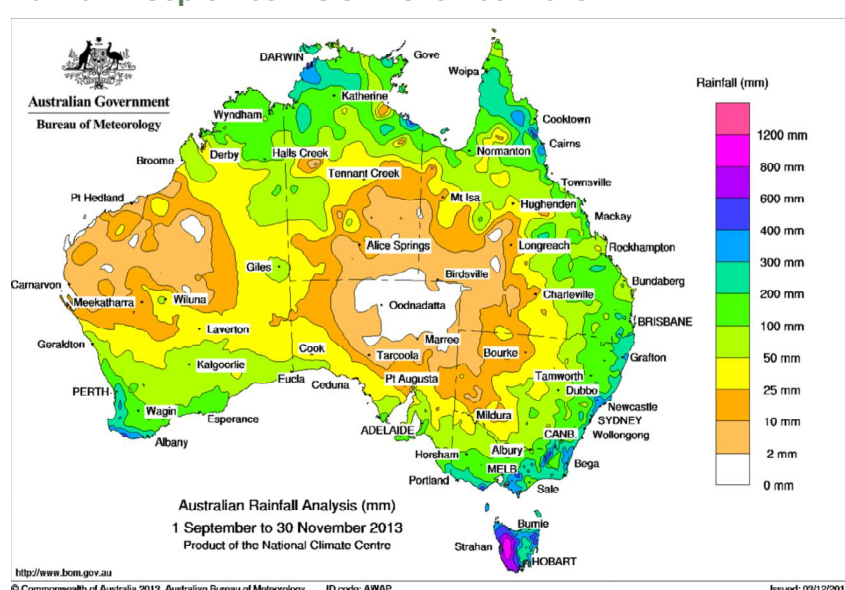
Chance of exceeding the median Rainfall December 2013 - February 2014



Rainfall November 2013



Rainfall 1 September to 31 November 2013



ACFA Board meets with Hon. Dr John McVeigh MP

Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA) Directors met with Queensland State Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, The Hon. Dr. John McVeigh MP, and his advisor, Lachlan Millar, at their November Board Meeting.



On the agenda for discussion was the State Governments plan to double agricultural production by 2040, their R&D strategy, the rising cost of production and how the Queensland State Government could plan to align policies with the new Federal Government.

The Minister also advised the Board of two bills he had introduced to parliament that very day; a new biosecurity legislation and an amendment bill to reform agricultural education and training.

The Minister said the new biosecurity legislation will cut red tape and further protect Queensland agricultural industries.

“Since becoming Minister last year I have met regularly with a broad range of agricultural industry representatives to discuss further amendments to the Bill,” Mr McVeigh said.

“Over the past 12 months we have had to deal with the bovine Johne disease (BJD), detection of Red Witch Weed in Mackay and the ongoing improvements to the fire ant program which has given us an opportunity to fine tune this new legislation.

“So with an even broader range of biosecurity risks threatening our agriculture industries, legislative change is critical for us to adapt to these challenges.

“The Bill will simplify a number of biosecurity-related permit schemes and provide a rationalisation of fees.”

Mr McVeigh said the Bill demonstrated the Newman Government’s

commitment to cutting red tape by repealing six biosecurity-related Acts and amending three others to ensure the laws are clearer, efficient and work to protect our primary industries

Regarding the amendment bill to reform agricultural education and training, the Minister said skilling the future generations of rural and regional Queenslanders is an essential component of the Newman Government’s commitment to agriculture.

“This Bill delivers on our election promise to make agriculture one of the four pillars of the economy and our plan to double food production by 2040.”

Mr McVeigh said this legislation would formalise the local College Board arrangements he had put in place earlier this year at Emerald and Longreach.

ACFA noted that agricultural education for young people looking to want a career in agriculture is an important aspect of the industry’s Next Gen program.

2014 Thai Study Tour

Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA) would like to advise that dates for the ACFA Thai Study Tour have now been confirmed.

The main group will be departing Brisbane on Saturday 18th January 2014 with the return flight departing on Tuesday 28th January 2014 (landing in Brisbane on 29th January).

Please see below for a Tour Schedule.

Thai Study Tour Schedule		
Activity	Dates	Notes
Flight	18/01.2013	Brisbane to Bangkok: Depart:13:35, Arrive 19:45, Flight TG474
Bangkok	19/01/13 to 20/01/2013	Free time for sightseeing in Bangkok
Tour	21/01/13 to 25/01/2013	Industry Tour
Resort	26/01/13 to 27/01/2013	Free time for rest & relaxation at resort location
Flight	28/01/2013	Bangkok to Brisbane: Depart 23:59, Arrive 12:05 (29/01/13), Flight TG473



Flights

The suggested flights to Bangkok from Brisbane and return are with Thai Airways. Of course you are free to fly with whichever company you wish and stay for as long as you like before or after the Industry Tour, however you will need to be available in Bangkok on 21st January 2013 to depart for the Industry Tour. Below are links to companies who you will be able to book your flights through.

<http://www.thaiairways.com.au/index.asp>

<http://www.flightcentre.com.au/>

<http://www.expedia.com.au/Flights>

Bangkok & Resort accommodation

In Bangkok and the resort location, names of suggested hotels will follow and you will be able to book with them directly. Again, you will be free to choose alternate accommodation.

Industry Tour accommodation

Regarding hotel bookings for the Industry Tour, we will book as a group and if the hotels require a deposit, ACFA will collect the necessary funds and pay prior to the tour. If this is not required, each individual will pay at the hotel upon arrival.

Children

The Tour organiser in Thailand has confirmed that the entire Tour will be suitable for children and encourages them to come along.

Tour Bus

We will need to book a bus and tour driver ASAP, so please can you email admin@acfa.com.au to confirm your attendance on the tour.

For current travel advice from the Australian Government, please visit www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html

Any questions, please do not hesitate to email admin@acfa.com.au.



The delegation at Bonsucro Week

Bonsucro Week

I once again had the opportunity to represent ACFA at the Bonsucro board meeting and AGM in New Orleans during Bonsucro week.

There were 35 countries represented at the meeting, and while there were some good times had in the 'Big Easy', a lot was achieved at the board meeting and side meeting of the AGM.

The field trip included a visit to the John Deere factory to view the latest harvesters including the small articulated harvester built for the small scale growers in India and China particularly. We also visited a couple of harvesters in the field and a refinery.

We were hosted by Charlie and Romney Richard at their home, the owners and producers of the Sugar Journal for cocktails, it was great to catch up with both of them. They opened their home and hearts to over 100 people; wow that was southern hospitality!

Bonsucro sponsored 6 farmers from the global regions to participate in the conference. These growers participated in a very successful farmer day where 24 farmers and others sat down and discussed what farmers want, what they can get from Bonsucro and how this may be achieved.



Robert Quirk speaking at Bonsucro Week

Some of the outcomes were that the Global Farmer Working Group will put a proposal to the Board of Bonsucro whereby growers can be audited and certified to the Bonsucro standard. This will allow them then to be able to trade certificates for the sugar they grow. This may only be available to growers where the mill is not a member of Bonsucro and is certified.

Discussions with Government and NGO's on my return has had positive feedback, this certification will be open to all cane growers in Australia and around the globe.

Robert Quirk, ACFA Director.

QSL In The Field With Next Gen Farmers

Monday, 18 November 2013



Members of the Bundaberg/Isis Next Gen group gather at the Andreoli farm, south of Bundaberg, to inspect the results of herbicide treatments in cane.

Twenty young growers attended the Bundaberg/Isis Next Gen meeting on Thursday afternoon, which also included two local farm visits to look at the results of various herbicide treatments and eco-blend fertiliser application, and hear about a new fertiliser product.

After the farm visits, the Next Gen group moved to the Alloway Country Club for their regular meeting. This included an update on QSL's activities and a look at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Farm Economic Analysis Tool, which was devised to help growers keep track of on-farm costs and expenditure.

Cathy said QSL was a major sponsor and strong supporter of the Next Gen program, which aims to encourage and support young sugar cane farmers and

ensure the transfer of established farming knowledge to the incoming generation.

"Our regular attendance at these kinds of forums has helped QSL establish strong relationships with Queensland's up-and-coming young farmers, and through them we also reach the older generations of their farming families," she said.

"They're typically very keen to learn all they can about the value QSL brings them and how they can better use our services and pricing products to maximise their returns."

If you'd like to know more about the Next Gen program visit www.nextgenfarmer.com



Photo (left to right):
Mr Yutaro Tako, Managing Director
Mitsui Sugar Co presents gift to
QSL Directors Guy Cowan,
Sarah Scales and Greg Beashel.

QSL Celebrating 21 million tonnes exchanged with Japan

25 NOVEMBER 2013

QSL welcomed long-standing Japanese customers Mitsui and Mitsubishi and their associated refinery representatives to Queensland last week to celebrate a significant milestone of 21 million tonnes of sugar exchanged between Australia and Japan since 1974.

The occasion was marked with an industry dinner with grower and miller representatives, and a grower and mill visit.

CEO Greg Beashel said QSL valued the relationship the Queensland sugar industry had with Japan and looked forward to it continuing to flourish into the future.

“Mitsubishi and Mitsui are two of the largest diversified trading houses in Japan and we are privileged to do business with them,” Mr Beashel said.

“We made our first ever sale of sugar to Japan in 1954 under the Queensland Sugar Board and the relationship gathered momentum from that point forward with regular shipments of sugar shipped from 1974 onwards.”

Mr Beashel said Japan had specific requirements when it came to imported sugar, particularly around polarisation qualities.

“Australia is one of two countries now supplying the majority of this particular sugar with Thailand the other. As the largest marketer of

Australian raw sugar exports, QSL proudly supplied the vast majority of Australia’s tonnage last year to Japan,” Mr Beashel said.

“At QSL, we pride ourselves on our ability to deliver a quality product that meets our customers’ needs and this is evident by the long-term partnership we have with our Japanese customers.”

QSL has a detailed sampling system in place for sugar that is destined for Japan including; on arrival of sugar at the terminal, loading onto the ship and on arrival at the destination port.

“With all of these testing procedures in place, you can guarantee QSL’s commitment to delivering a product that meets our Japanese customers’ needs.”

Mr Beashel said he looked forward to working with Mitsui, Mitsubishi and their associated refineries into the future.



Cathy Kelly

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Carla Keith

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QSL Update

WEEK ENDING 6.12.13

By QSL Industry Relationship Managers Cathy Kelly and Carla Keith

As 2013 draws to a close, QSL is already looking to 2014 to achieve prosperity for our members by maximising the pool price. We do this by creating value across our four key business functions, which collectively contribute to reducing costs and increasing revenue for our members. So with this in mind, here's how things are shaping up for the year ahead.

Financing

We will continue to provide our members with low-cost financing through our Advances Program and will look at ways in which we can advance more money earlier in pools where there is a greater level of price certainty. We'll also work to maintain the strong relationships we have with our banking partners and ensure they understand our business and provide us with competitive funding. We currently receive financing through our commercial paper program, which is supported by a \$500m credit facility, and will continue to review this finance borrowing structure to achieve the best value for you.

Our improved rating outlook from Standard and Poor's in July this year to 'stable' from 'negative' has provided us with reductions in our cost of funds. Standard and Poor's improved this outlook after a detailed assessment of our business structure. We highlighted to Standard and Poor's that MSF has undertaken to sign the new raw sugar supply agreement and that mills will be given the option to buy back their economic interest sugar. We are working to maintain this outlook and our credit rating of 'A long-term' and 'A1 short-term' at our annual review in July 2014.

Pricing

QSL will continue to provide knowledge, expertise and experience to our members through pricing and managing futures markets. We will offer the same range of pooling options next season as we believe they provide the right mix of options with varied risk appetites. It's important, however, that growers talk to their mill about the options available to them, as not all mills offer the full suite of QSL pooling options.

As always, we will work hard to outperform benchmark market returns by taking a view and managing our pools in line with this view, on both the sugar and foreign exchange markets. You will be able to track our performance through the regular updates on each of QSL's managed pools available on our website.



Current indicative price for QSL's 2013 pools are:

**Current as of 15th November 2013
2013 Gross**

QSL Harvest Pool	\$393
QSL Discretionary Pool	\$396
QSL Actively Managed Pool	\$409
QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool	\$391
QSL US Quota Pool	\$472
QSL 2013 Season Forward Pool	\$428
QSL 2014 Season Forward Pool	\$415

Note: The prices given are in Gross \$A dollars/ IPS tonnes and don't include a shared pool allocation.

Marketing

In 2014, we will continue to be the largest seller of Australian raw sugar and expect to sell around two million tonnes. Our strategy is to maximise returns through optimising sales timing, terms and customer premiums. We will target the best value and maintain our strong brand by working with our long-term partners and high-returning, credit-worthy customers.

An area we will be looking to further increase opportunities is through negotiating flexible customer contracts. The aim will be to optimise all potential revenue opportunities, including provisions for flexibility around other-origin options, shipment periods and tonnage quantities. We will also engage directly with refineries at a technical level to match sugar supply to their specific needs with the aim of attracting stronger premiums. As always, we will be on the look-out for all potential opportunities.

Another key focus in 2014 will be the ongoing work with industry and government to include sugar in free-

trade negotiations with Japan and China as well as the Trans Pacific Partnership. Inclusion will allow us to compete on an equal footing against our competitors and ultimately increase our returns.

QSL will also continue to work with industry to develop a marketing model for a sustainable future for the Queensland sugar industry and part of this will be working towards obtaining a long-term commitment to the Raw Sugar Supply Agreement.

Logistics

We will safely and efficiently store, handle and ship raw sugar by collectively managing the six bulk sugar terminals to achieve cost efficiencies and maximise shipping flexibility. This gives us the ability to also maximise the storage capacity to enable us to optimise sales opportunities in the market. For example, we are currently leveraging storage capabilities to enable sales to be made in the higher-returning out-of-season period. QSL will work with reputable chartering companies to maintain a track record of delivering QSL chartered shipments on-time and in-full.

In the year ahead we will work closely with millers who are chartering their own shipments to manage a cohesive and coordinated logistics plan. We will also look for opportunities to store and ship other products where it makes sense to do so and where value can be derived to help reduce the overall operational costs of QSL. As part of our maintenance schedule, we are also planning to re-roof sheds one and two at Lucinda.



Neil-Fisher

**By Neil Fisher,
Chief Executive Officer**

9 December 2013

Sugar Research Australia

Industry Update

This year the Australian sugarcane industry witnessed an unprecedented level of change in its research, development and extension (RD&E) landscape. I would like to thank our levy payers and the industry representative bodies for supporting the Sugar RD&E Reform package and entrusting SRA to deliver better RD&E solutions on the farm and at the mill.

What's in store in 2014

Cementing our RD&E direction

I am pleased to announce that the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, has approved the Interim Strategic Plan and Consultation Plan. With these plans now signed off we can confidently move ahead with finalising the SRA 2013/4–2017/18 Strategic Plan in the New Year.

This longer-term plan will be guided by the feedback that we have nearly finished collecting through the regional consultation forums, online survey and written submissions. The numbers at the regional forums were encouraging and attendees participated in a robust conversation showing that there is great industry interest in having a say in its RD&E future.

Early next year, we will engage with ASA and other industry representative bodies to draft and finalise the plan.

Selecting the best research project and postgraduate scholarship applications

Applications for postgraduate scholar-ships close next week, followed by research projects early next month. The Research Funding Panel will review each application and evaluate it against four key strategic imperatives: Industry growth, Cost and profitability, Environmental and regulatory pressures, and Diversification.

This stringent process will ensure that only those applications that can deliver value to industry will be funded. We will announce the successful applicants in the first half of 2014.

Nominating delegates

Thank you to all of you who have completed and returned your SRA Membership Application form. While a great number of you want to become a SRA Member there are still more levy payers than Members. It's important that you return your Membership Application form to become more involved in SRA.

We will call for Delegates to be nominated from grower and miller Member representatives early next year. Delegates will have prime responsibility for electing the Director Selection Committee members, as well as considering matters relating to SRA Performance Reviews and the Sugarcane Levy.

Remember, growers are not automatically a Member – you must return your completed form to SRA – so make sure you do that today.

Improving the sugarcane varieties of the future

A Review Panel – appointed by ASA and coordinated by SRA – was formed in September to re-evaluate the main components of the production system and the economic weightings that are used in variety selection.

The regional Variety Adoption groups – which include representatives from SRA, CANEGROWERS, ASMC and grower and milling businesses – have completed their regional meetings and reviewed:

- which characteristics are more important than others at a district level
- whether the income-cost structures applied to growing, harvesting and milling are appropriate
- what our industry will look like in 10–12 years.

The Panel will meet in early 2014 to consider what updates are necessary to the current system.

And more to come

This is just a snapshot of the key activities that are planned for our return from the holiday break. There will be many other actions that we need to deliver and I will keep you informed of their progress.

I wish you all a happy and safe festive season and look forward to supporting you in your businesses next year.

Industry News

07/11/13

Agriculture Minister announces farm help changes

The Federal Agriculture Minister announced changes to the Farm Finance debt relief package that will see more funding directed to Queensland, NSW and Victoria, at the expense of other states and the NT reported ABC Rural.

05/11/13

Demand for molasses outstripping supply in QLD

The Queensland Minister for Agriculture, John McVeigh, met with lobby groups and sugar millers to try and address the enormous demand for molasses across Queensland as a result of the drought reported ABC Rural.

01/11/13

Native title respondent funding

The Attorney-General the Abbott Government will reinstate the funding to native title respondents that was withdrawn by Labor said the Senator Hon. George Brandis QC.

14/11/13

Joyce maiden speech champions family farms

The Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce made a passionate and unapologetic defence of the family farm in his maiden speech to the House of Representatives reported ABC Rural.

15/11/13

Coalition changes environment protection laws

The Federal Government introduced a bill that would make it harder to challenge Commonwealth environmental approvals in court reported ABC Rural.

14/11/13

Next Gen crop of cane growers

Young Mackay-based cane professional, Hayden Quabba, was named as one of eight regional Next Gen Industry Reps at the Case IH Step UP! Conference. The Next Gen program for Australian cane professionals will continue its commitment to young industry leaders by delivering a cutting edge program at the end of 2013 in Brisbane reported The Morning Bulletin.

14/11/13

Sweet buy for Mackay Sugar

Mackay Sugar will have an extra 85,000 tonnes of cane to crush once its newest farm is developed. The company purchased another 1000ha of cane land from a farmer at Blue Mountain to try to increase its profits reported The Observer.

12/11/13

Rain a 'godsend' in parts of NSW

Rain across parts of New South Wales improved the mood and prospects for many farmers reported ABC Rural.

11/11/13

Farmers get bushy for Movember

Cane farmer Michael Hetherington headed a team for Movember, and is no stranger to growing out his lush facial hair reported ABC Rural.

11/11/13

Sugar mills report losses to typhoon

BACOLOD CITY -- Two of the biggest sugar mills in Negros Occidental reported losses of almost half a million bags of sugar from super typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan) as officials warned of reduced yield this crop year reported Business World Online.

08/11/13

Broadwater and Condong cogeneration plants sold

The NSW Sugar Milling Cooperative sold cogeneration plants at Broadwater and Condong to Swiss based investment company Capital Dynamics for an undisclosed sum reported Northern Rivers Echo.

07/11/13

Sugar business lifts Wilmar's profits as firm bucks trend

Wilmar International Ltd 's reported a 2.5 percent increase in its third quarter profit from a year earlier as a boost in sugar milling and merchandising activities offset weakness in the palm oil business reported Reuters.

21/11/13

Professor predicts food boom won't bring higher prices

A global food researcher says his work indicates the price of food will continue to get cheaper during this century reported ABC Rural.

21/11/13

Agricultural training gets a shot in the arm

As the 2013 academic year draws to a close, legislation to overhaul Queensland's agricultural training colleges was before parliament reported ABC Rural.

20/11/13

New R&D legislation improves services and removes red tape

Legislation introduced into Parliament will ensure Australia's rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) are structured effectively to continue Australia's success in agriculture that has been built on research and development said the Minister for Agriculture, The Hon. Barnaby Joyce.

18/11/13

Mossman Mill records largest crop in years

Mossman's 2013 crushing season ended, with this year's crop the largest the town's mill has handled for a number of years reported The Newsport.

18/11/13

QLD grazier Brent Finlay new NFF President

The members of Australia's peak farm body, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), elected Queensland grazier Brent Finlay as the NFF's 12th President, taking the reins from outgoing President Duncan Fraser.

18/11/13

Indonesia, the sweet spot for food exporters

Indonesia's demand for sugar, cakes and western food is growing at one of the fastest rates in the world reported ABC Rural.

18/11/13

QSL in the field with Next Gen farmers

Twenty young growers attended the Bundaberg/Isis Next Gen meeting in November, which also included two local farm visits to look at the results of various herbicide treatments and eco-blend fertiliser application, and hear about a new fertiliser product.

16/09/13

BNDES gives Raizen \$91 million for cellulosic ethanol plant

In Brazil, the national development bank BNDES approved a \$91 million loan for Raizen to build a second-generation ethanol plant reported Biofuels Digest.

21/11/13

Sugar's push for trade deal

Australia's sugarcane industry is pushing to ensure sugar is included in the federal government's free trade negotiations, particularly in the 12-nation Trans Pacific Partnership (TTP) talks reported the North Queensland Register.

22/11/13

Barnaby Joyce postpones trip to Indonesia, state-owned cattle firm halts talks amid spying allegations

Federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has postponed a planned trip to Indonesia in light of the ongoing spying scandal reported ABC Rural.

23/11/13

Farmer blasts Mackay Sugar's 'inefficient' mill operation

He has dedicated more than six decades to the sugar industry, but Mirani cane farmer Jeff Bradshaw feels his hard work has gone to waste reported The Daily Mercury.

25/11/13

Canefarmers keen to see back end of carbon tax

Hinkler MP Keith Pitt has told Australian Parliament sugarcane farmers believe they would save 10% on their electricity bills with the repeal of the carbon tax reported the Sunshine Coast Daily.

26/11/13

Sugar: Brazilian model producing more ethanol and reducing output

PUNE: About 250 representatives of the sugar co-operatives in Maharashtra have learnt the techniques of producing more ethanol and less sugar from cane reported The Economic Times.

27/11/13

Mills shut up shop in Indian sugar protest

Indian milling companies involved in an escalating price dispute with their growers have found a novel way to register their protest against government interference in price setting reported ABC Rural.

27/11/13

Elders chief executive denies he was 'pushed'

Malcolm Jackman, the CEO of one of Australia's largest agribusiness companies, Elders, has resigned.

27/11/13

Northern food bowl vision stirs political stew

Visions of a northern Australian 'food bowl' and growing mining sector to supply Asian markets are causing a stew in the Northern Territory reported ABC News.

27/11/13

Land Grab: Foreign Firms Drive Cambodians from Farms

Each year, foreign agricultural corporations deprive thousands of Cambodian farmers of their fields - with the government's help. Human rights groups claim German taxpayer money is used to fund a program that benefits land grabbers reported Spiegel Online International.

29/11/13

Rural mental health at risk

The National Mental Health Commission's second national report card on mental health and suicide prevention has delivered a damning assessment of the landscape in rural and regional Australia, with men most at risk reported Queensland Country Life.

03/12/13

Growers put sugar research wish list

The new body responsible for sugar research and development in Australia has been given a clear message about how cane growers want the future program to be driven reported ABC Rural.

04/12/13

Joyce approves SRA Plan

Sugar Research Australia Ltd's (SRA) Interim Strategic Plan was formally approved by Federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce reported The Land.

06/12/13

Union fights plan to extend sugar mill backpackers

The Australian Workers Union slammed a move by a far north Queensland sugar mill to employ unskilled foreign workers reported ABC Rural.

06/12/13

Beef and sugar big winners from Korean trade deal

Australia's beef and sugar industries celebrated an agreement with South Korea on free trade, saying it means Australia will remain competitive in one of its most important export markets reported ABC Rural.

09/12/13

Govt keeps TPP details from Senate

The government has refused the Senate access to the secret text of the trade deal it is negotiating in Singapore, saying it will only be made public after it has been signed reported Queensland Country Life.

Cane farmers unite for Movember



In October, Childers cane farmer and ACFA Southern Director Michael Hetherington, lay down the challenge to cane farmers from all over Queensland and New South Wales to grow a 'Mo' in November to help raise money for a great cause.

The Movember Foundation runs the annual 'Movember' event which involves the growing of moustaches during the month of November to help raise awareness of men's health issues, including cancers and mental health.

The call was answered and a team was formed who committed themselves to growing magnificent moustaches for the entire month of November. Together the Stubble Shavers raised an impressive \$550.

Thank you to all of those who took part and donated to this very worthy cause. We look forward to the **Stubble Shavers** reforming next year.

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WIN AN IPAD MINI!

Send us your favourite photo from around the farm for your chance to win an iPad mini.

The winning photographer will receive an iPad mini and will have their winning photo published in Australian Cane Farmer and on acfa.com.au!

Suggested themes include (but not limited to):

- My favourite old tractor;
- My best old Akubra;
- My loyal farm dog;
- Picturesque sugarcane landscapes;
- Next Gen family farmer



All photos must be sent to admin@acfa.com.au with your full name and short description of the photo by 4pm on Friday 31st January 2014. Please send your photo in a high resolution format. Winners will be notified by Friday 28th February 2014.

Mossman region



Gerard Puglisi
Northern Region Director

The 2013 crush is over for another year, with the Mossman Mill finishing on the 15th of November with an average CCS of 12.75 and a total of 587 261.77t passing through the rollers. This is by far the best harvest Mossman has seen in the last nine years. The yields for the 2013 crush were pleasingly up by 13% with a mill area average of 77t/ha. The Tablelands, Mulgrave and South Johnstone mills were all completed by the first week in December. Final figures for these mills were unavailable at the time of writing my report, but I will have the final figures for my next report.

With Mossman having a mid November finish and some favourable weather condition, most farmers have now completed their fertiliser programs and are over half way through their spraying programs.

The Tableland Mill at the end of week 21 was averaging 114t/ha and the CCS was still averaging around 14.16.

The Mulgrave areas CCS was starting to drop slightly and it is now below the five-year average. The yields however are on track for an above average year. I am also happy to report that the industrial issues between MSF and its work force have now been resolved.

The South Johnstone area's CCS has remained average and their yields are also on track for an above average year.

At the moment the crops in the Mossman, Tablelands, Mulgrave and South Johnstone regions are looking very good and if weather conditions remain favourable the signs are there for another good season in 2014. The amount of late harvested cane or late ratoons will be a limiting factor for the 2014 crop.

Representing ACFA on the Bargaining Agents Committee with the Mossman Mill, I currently attend the monthly meetings and at present we are in negotiations for the 2014 season. The initial proposal of a 30-week crush for the 2014 season has been revised down to a possible 25 – 26 week season in 2014 (including weather related stops). This reduction was revised after the Mill was successful in finding some factory efficiencies, which has enabled the Mill to increase its predicted crush rate up to around 330t/hr. The factory has achieved these crush rates for periods of time throughout the 2013 season. If Mackay sugar continues to improve Mossman Mill and the crush rate is increased in the coming years, then the season length could drop back to a 23-24 week season including wet weather.

Some of the information that has been passed onto the Bargaining agents that effect the 2014 season are listed below:

- Qube Logistics was awarded the successful tender for all road transport from 2014;
- Road transport will be returning to the old push-pull system and operate b-double and single trucks;
- There will be a number of 'mobile' trailers instead of building new stands;
- 240 new bins – to be brought into the fleet with around 100 old rail bins to be taken out of the system;

- Electronic consignment will be used on the Tableland;
- Mackay Sugar is to employ an additional Harvest Transport Coordinator;
- Mackay Sugar signed-off on boiler re-tube and repairs;
- A new overhead crane will be installed for the milling train area;
- The old three mega-watt alternator will be upgraded;
- A focus on improving crushing rate; i.e. de-scale work, milling train, shredder refurbishment etc.;
- Carry critical spares for contingency;
- Additional key operators will be employed and undertake required training.

In early November I again had the privilege, along with fellow director Robert Quirk, of representing ACFA at the annual Bonsucro Conference, which this year was held in New Orleans.

A massive 120 people representing 49 Member companies actively participated in person in most of the 23 activities over five days in Louisiana. It was the most successful Bonsucro conference to date.

The week started with a tour at the John Deere factory follow by a Sugar Plantation Tour and finally a tour of the United States Department of Agriculture facility. (Similar to our Old BSES stations – now SRA)

Day two was another farm tour along with a tour of the Raceland Raw Sugar Mill and then a tour through the Louisiana Sugar Refining company.

The Farmer Focus and Standard Revision Day were well represented with 80 delegates from 21 different countries attending and giving feed back in the direction of where they would like to see the Bonsucro standard end up. Bonsucro, Head of Sustainability, **Nicolas Viart** presented delegates with information on the next wave of evolution for the revision of the Standard. The revised standard will soon be available on the Bonsucro web Site for Public consultation.

The rest of the week was the in house conference where we had guest speakers from all over the world talking in relation to the conference theme of 'New Markets and New Opportunities'.

The stand out speaker for me was **Jason Clay**, Senior Vice President, Market transformation, World Wildlife Fund. His topic was 'Our goal is to figure out how to produce more with less land, less water and less pollution, so we won't be the only species left living on this planet.'

Some of the numbers he spoke about put the future of the sugar industry in a bright light, but will it come at a cost. He spoke how in the next 40 years the world will need to produce as much food as it has made over the last 8000 years. By 2050 around 9 billion people will need to be fed and that will require double the amount of food we produce today. These extra people will need places to live using

more of our agricultural land. Currently 40% of the world's surface is used to produce food and there is no sign of this area majorly increasing. So as farmers we need to be more sustainable, so we are here for the long haul.

Case IH again sponsored the annual dinner where 100 people witnessed **Davi Alencar de Araújo** from **Raizen** take out this year's Bonsucro Sustainability Award.

If growers would like more information about the Bonsucro Conference or Bonsucro in general please do not hesitate to contact me or visit the Bonsucro Web site.

I would also like to thank the next gen farmers and industry representatives that attended the recent Leadership program which was held in Brisbane on the 2-6 of December. I learned a lot that will help me further my leadership skills in the Sugar industry.

I would also like to remind and encourage any interested farmers to visit the Next Gen website for further information on Next Gen's other upcoming Business Planning & Cash flow Management course which are due to be held in six regions throughout the industry early 2014.

For more information please log onto the Next Gen web site: www.nextgenfarmer.com

Finally on behalf of my family and myself, we would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

Gerard Puglisi

Northern Director

Herbert region



Carol Mackee
Herbet Region Director

Good rainfall has fallen over the whole district, the rain was a welcome reprieve from the dry conditions we were experiencing.

The crushing season finished at the end of October and with the rain we have had it looks like 2014 season will be off to a good start. While the rain has been most welcome, farmers are now out and about spot spraying and trying to keep the weeds at a manageable level.

Rats have become a problem over the whole district and feral pigs are about as well. Unfortunately the pig programme is in limbo as Terrain has now run out of funding. It is crucial that this programme is kept going as it has seen the removal of over 1,400 pigs taken out of the district. This is only a drop in the proverbial bucket, as they breed in National Parks while farmers are left trying to combat this feral pest.

Having just come back from a Board Meeting in Brisbane and on a lighter note, it was a privilege while there to catch up with singer Charley Pride – for those who remember who he is. He certainly entertained the older generation with many a song over the wireless. I believe our photo is on Burdekin Facebook for those who are interested.

I attended a North Queensland Bio Energy meeting. Engineer Ken McIntosh is in China at present overseeing the plans for the new mill.

A SRA meeting on the 28th November was attended by approximately 43 growers. The overall outcome was for better varieties, productivity and profitability and soil improvement. To my way of thinking productivity/profitability seems to be a catch 22 situation. If you are profitable you are able to put more improvements into you soil. Without profitability, you can only put in what you can afford. SRA was told in no uncertain terms how farmers were thinking. We have been assured the comments will be assessed and we will be privy to the findings. Let us hope that the organisation pays attention, as our input costs are outpacing our returns. At the present time there is very little return on our investment. Hard work deserves to prosper.

As the year is fast coming to a close I wish everyone a safe, healthy and prosperous year for 2014 and a Happy Festive Season.

Carol Mackee

Herbert Region Director

Burdekin region



Margaret Menzel
Burdekin Director

With the 2013 Burdekin harvest now well and truly completed, growers are busy fertilising, managing and irrigating their 2014 crops and have been glad of some welcome rain in the district, in recent weeks. The mills are well into maintenance mode, with Invicta and Pioneer mills crushing their last cane for the season on 9th and 16th October, respectively and the last of the district mills, Inkerman and Kalamia, finishing on 23rd October. Wilmar's recently appointed Executive General Manager for North Queensland, John Pratt has advised that it is only the third time in the past 25 years that the Burdekin mills have finished crushing in October. The previous years were 1991 and 2009.

Despite almost perfect weather during the harvest season, the very poor crop, at 7.293 million tonnes of cane will leave the districts farmer's suffering another serious financial loss this year. The crop is almost one million tonnes less than an average season's crop for the Burdekin district and well under the productivity levels the district is capable of producing.

The ccs season averages for the district, at 14.61, tracked below the region's 10 year average but almost half a unit higher than last season's result. Another disappointing year to compound last year's woes or for the 'glass half full approach', the early finish will hopefully give next year's crop a good start and plenty of growing time to mature. Let's hope the mills will capably manage a larger crop size and that maintenance and capital works will provide improvements to ensure it.

The incidence of Yellow Cane Syndrome (YCS) in the district has certainly caused serious losses for at least the past two seasons, especially in some areas of the region. The dry weather seems to have provided some improvement in YCS activity but there will need to be serious attention paid to the syndrome, hopefully including the employment of an independent forensic pathologist, to find the syndromes origin; in order that we're able to find a solution and ensure future bio-security retains its effectiveness.

Recently a Burdekin Breeding Program Review meeting was held to receive feedback from the growing sector and review the existing plant breeding program. While the industry understands the need for higher ccs canes, the meeting heard lively discussion on the need for canes with vigorous growth, giving higher fibre canes serious consideration. Many vigorous, high fibre canes have been dismissed in the past as the mills have more difficulty in processing these varieties. With the mills now seeing more financial interest in the fibre content of cane, this negativity should be revised and growers also rewarded for the fibre content of their crop.

ACFA Regional meetings were held in the final days of the season, with ACFA General Manager, Stephen Ryan and Chairman, Don Murday attending. Given the timing within days of season's end, the meeting was well attended. Many local and industry issues were raised and discussed vigorously. Local rates (the second

highest in the state!) caused serious consternation, as did the unjustifiable water and electricity charges. Some attending farmers reported their electricity charges at \$9/tonne of cane for irrigation. These costs, in addition to existing costs of production, confirm Burdekin farmers are suffering impossible financial outlays and receiving inadequate returns for their investment and their fixed costs, let alone allowing any repayment on loans or improvement and replacement costs, etc.

The meeting passed motions to request that the ACFA board make representations to the state government and relevant ministers, to demand immediate relief for the district's farmers, who are paying far and above, the highest cane growing costs in the nation! Subsequent investigations at ACFA state board level has shown that comparative rates across other cane farming districts show a disparity from the Herbert (\$131/ha), Burdekin BRIA (\$105.18/ha) falling dramatically in the Cairns Region (\$37.33/ha), Tweed (\$32.39/ha), Mackay Region (\$23.40/ha) and Bundaberg (\$23.32/ha). (Sample - 2013 per hectare rating charges).

To date, approaches by local Burdekin grower representatives to State Local Government Minister Crisafulli have met with a poor response and no consideration of the immense difficulty local growers are facing. Representations will persist until a more reasonable level of charges is levied from all levels of government, on all government 'services'. Election promises cannot be abandoned after the declaration of polls.

As the Christmas Season approaches and I look back over another year's activities and accomplishments in the Burdekin sugar industry, the networks that make up this industry and this community deserve recognition and thanks. From those who are the decision makers to those who implement the plans or believe in the industry's tomorrows, everyone's contribution turns the wheels of success. Whether it is ensuring the safety of others or the timely delivery of bins; every bin, on every day, delivered safely, matters to everyone. Thank you to any and everyone who has made the 2013 season safer, better, in whatever way you worked to do it.

Let's plan for 2014 to be better than any before.

Wishing you all Season's greetings for a happy Christmas with those you love and a safe and prosperous New Year!

Happy Christmas!

Margaret Menzel

Burdekin Director

Mob: 0407 779 700

Central region



Steve Fordyce
Central Region

MACKAY canegrowers can breathe a sigh of relief after an arduous season for farmers finally has drawn to an end. Mackay Sugar general manager Mark Gayton said the season had been a 'disappointment' with poorly performing mills and discontented farmers. Mackay Sugar wrapped up the 2013 season about 9pm on Saturday 23rd November at Farleigh Mill. The performance has been disappointing and recognised as that.

The wet weather on the Friday night before had an effect on getting the entire crop off. About 2,000 tonnes was not harvested: the farmers decided to leave it there and stand the cane over, because of the field conditions. The three mills crushed more than five million tonnes for the season with a PRS of 15.

A series of storms started on the 16th November with falls varying across the area. Larger falls south of Sarina have been over 100 mm. These rain events have provided some much needed relief from the continued dry and the need for irrigation. Follow up rain should put cane farmers in a good position for 2014.

BOM long-term weather forecasts have viewed the eastern districts as receiving less rain events this coming wet season.

The chances of exceeding the median rainfall during December to February are 30 to 40% over eastern Queensland, and the eastern Top End of the NT. In other words, the chances of below average rainfall are 60 to 70% over these areas. So, for every ten December to February outlooks with similar odds to these, about three or four of them would result in above-average rainfall over these areas, while about six or seven would be below average.

The Smartcane BMP Launch took place at the Deguara's farm Farleigh on 3rd December. Ministers Andrew Powell, Minister for Environment & Heritage Protection and John McVeigh Minister for Agriculture launched the project with Don Murday Chairman of Australian Cane Farmers Association and Paul Schrembri Chairman of Canegrowers.

The current situation with Red witchweed is continually being surveyed. Surveillance has been conducted over more than 9,000 ha. Properties have been identified for investigation based on links with infested properties such as shared equipment. No additional red witchweed has been detected, but further rounds of surveillance will be required through the summer months.

The pest is exotic to Australia but can grow on native tropical grasses common in headlands and pastures. Symptoms of red witchweed infestations include stunting, chlorosis, wilting and in some cases plant death. Much of the lifecycle occurs underground and the plant is only visible for a short period of time.

A full range of resources including how to identify witchweed and a fact sheet are available at www.daff.qld.gov.au or by calling Biosecurity Queensland 13 25 23

Steve Fordyce

Central Region

Southern region



Mike Hetherington
Southern Director

The photo below shows two things very relevant to our region. Poor strike in plant cane anywhere at least 500mm of irrigation did not fall. The other - pesticide drift in tree crop farming activity..

Firstly, due to no effective rainfall from February to November, it has been impossible to plant in the spring without adequate irrigation. 'Adequate', meaning some farmers have expended half of their allocation on just getting a strike. 'Expensive!' From my own point of view, I am not sure whether my new planting system was partly responsible. Anyone who has an opinion on this please make it known. I have both types of planting, but in different soil and situation, so maybe it was just dry, with a 'capital D.' Big Baz dry farming near Childers just did no planting.

The second part, drift. I raise this in anticipation of helping ourselves out, before big brother steps in. Put simply, as a cane farmer, I have to be 100% aware of drift, because of legislation and, perhaps worse, obvious crop damage to neighbouring tree-crops. Insecticide drift is invisible, but is it harmful. We need to look at this as an industry. The health of our rural-dwelling farmers is as much a part of our responsibility as soil, water etc. No farmers- no farm.

Some areas of the region have received up to 120 mm of storm rain. Absolutely a Christmas bonus! We would all hope that this spreads right across the region as with the early finish to crushing, the possibility of a 2014 'BUMPER' crop is possible.

Merry Christmas and a Safe New Year.

Regards

Michael Hetherington
Southern Region Director



NSW region



Robert Quirk
NSW Director

All mills in NSW have had an early finish. While the crop was not great, it was up substantially from last year.

The final figures were Condong 321,168; Broadwater 558,354; and Harwood 422,168.

Once again the plantings are at record levels, and most of the plant cane looks so good you would think some one else owned it.

It will still take many of us another two years to return to full production. A lot of the fields/ratoons are still suffering from the wet harvests, floods and poor growing seasons.

We are ever the optimists, that the next few years will see us return our production levels to normal. Mill extension staff have said that we have the most advanced crop they have seen since 1997 on the Tweed. I think most growers will look to get past the 26th of January without flooding in the coming crop cycle.

Varieties Q208 and Q183 are most certainly the stand outs in most district as one year old canes.

There is and will be a problem with burning Q208 as both one year and two year old crops, although I think that the benefits of both varieties far out way their constraints. Q208 's ability to resist flood damage has seen it as the major planting in some districts.

The sale of the co-gen plants at Condong and Broadwater has been a positive, which has given security to growers going forward. The deal has been very positive for growers and ensures that we will be processing sugar cane at the two mills mentioned in the long term.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish our members and staff at ACFA a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Robert Quirk
NSW Director



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