

Central Region

Crushing

Mackay Sugar finished crushing in early December processing nearly 5.5 million tons of cane at 14.3 PRS. Mill performance and cane supply had an indifferent performance. Mackay Sugar intends to address these issues to give a more acceptable result for next year.

The weather at the end of last year finished with useful rain, however conditions became very dry. At the end of December useful falls started and have continued throughout January. There have been optimum growing conditions, bringing the crop on quite well for this year

YCS

The effects of YCS are in the district again this year. Growers are quite concerned by visible signs in the crop for the coming season. It is obvious YCS is not specific to any variety. SRA had information meetings in December on the issue. Three research projects have been introduced to find out more on the issue – they are;

1. Solving the Sugarcane Yellow Canopy Syndrome;
2. What biological factors cause or drive the development of YCS;
3. A novel polyphasic framework to resolve the Yellow Canopy Syndrome Paradox.

Observations see that the YCS is not just associated with sugar cane but vegetation in the surrounding areas as well.

Red witch weed

Four cane growers and one grazier have suffered through what has been a long drawn out process. The National Management Group, which is the peak decision-making body for national eradication programs, is chaired by the Federal Department of Agriculture. The NMG's main role is to consider response plans and budgets for national eradication programs. NMG considers the technical feasibility and determination of cost sharing. Meetings with NMG have been rescheduled to February for finalising a plan. The issue of cost sharing of the resolution continues to be the stalemate. Redwitch weed is a notifiable Class 1 pest and as of yet, the mechanism to resolve the eradication program has not yet been established.

Wetland Work at Racecourse Mill

Mackay Sugar and Reef Catchments have joined to restore a degraded wetland area on Horse and Jockey Rd. The activities will focus on improving water quality and landscape health. Water quality is the main focus of the works by reinstalling a functioning wetland, which will allow a natural system to more effectively remove pollutants from the waterways. Currently water from a bagasse pad runs into a dam. Mackay Sugar will benefit from the improvements, with access to cleaner water and a larger water storage for the mill

to utilise. The water flows into the Botanical gardens then on to a Pioneer River estuary. This project will enhance the water quality entering these areas.

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