

Mossman/Tableland

In my last report I reported that the Mossman region had had a relatively dry start to the year with the first 3 months of this year receiving around 833.5mm of rain. That has now changed with the close to 400mm of rain falling in the region in late May. With the recent rain and at times wild winds, there is now large areas of lodged cane and the chance of finding straight plants has now severely reduced. These areas of lodged cane are wide spread and I expect it to have some effect to the harvestability of the 2016 crop. The rain event was a week before the scheduled start of Mossman Mill on the 30th of May which was delayed until 6th June. Then from 13 to 20 June 100mm rain fell and brought the crush to a standstill.

This year, the offseason maintenance work focused on factory availability, with work being carried out on the Effet Station to improve vacuum piping and efficiency, mechanically cleaning scale from the tubes, reducing leaks, replacing the ESJ tank, and trying to fix number-six mill's top roller issue. Work has also been carried out on the John Thompson boiler where new dry dust collectors have been installed to reduce stack emissions and air flow improvement.

Growers are also reminded that this year all reports will come from Mackay Sugar and growers can opt to receive a text message for daily reports or the information will also be available on the Mackay Sugar website. To obtain a "log in" for your farm and delivery details please contact Sue Carmichael on 4030 4103 or s.carmichael@mkysugar.com.au.

Local farmers are also eager for some dry weather so they can start their planting programs; to date there has been some early planting carried out. Growers are reminded that before they intend to plant to please contact their local Productivity Board for a plant-source inspection. For an accurate reading it can take a few weeks for the results, so please give your field officer plenty of notice before you intend to plant.

The Mackay Sugar, Mossman Mill Productivity Awards for the 2015 season were held at the Mossman Bowls Club Hall on 14 April 2016. The annual event recognises farming excellence within the Mackay Sugar Mossman cane supply network. This year's event was well attended with a social evening enjoyed by everyone that attended.

The winner in each coastal zone had the highest tonnes of sugar per hectare from a farm of over 1,000 tonnes production, and over 20 hectares in size.

The winners for 2015 season were:

Daintree	CA Mcdowall
Bamboo, Syndicate, Whyanbeel	D'Addona's Electrical and Farming
Miallo	C Fasano & Co
Mossman	C Fasano & Co
Shannonvale, Cassowary	J & J D'Addona
Mowbray	C Fasano & Co
Julatten	PJ & MA Verri
Atherton and Tolga	Primo Produce
Canegrowing Excellence Award	C Fasano & Co
Best Average Producer 2015	C Fasano & Co
Young Grower Award	Brenton Eagle
Sustainable Management Practices Award	Puglisi Farming
Best Presented Farm Award	Puglisi Farming
In Appreciation for on-farm Research	Brie Brie Estate

I would like to congratulate all the winners of this year's awards.

QSL is asking growers who are interested in 2017 Marketing Choice and QSL pricing options to register on their website. It's an easy process that only takes a couple of minutes – I strongly urge farmers to register.

Just check out the link below and fill out the electronic form:

<http://www.qsl.com.au/marketing-choice-%E2%80%93-2017-season>

Once you're in QSL's system they can keep you updated and informed on 2017 QSL pricing options.

Next Gen Bus Trip 2015

On the 18th of April a group of 14 Next Generation participants from Mossman to Northern New South Wales left Mossman on a 4-day trip to the Burdekin and back to Mossman.

The purpose of the trip was to provide next generation growers with greater knowledge and build their skills on minimising harvest losses, value chain improvements, farming systems, production management, how other regions work, and to build networks with other next generation people in other regions of the sugar industry.

The most important knowledge gained by this project has been a greater understanding of the issues facing the whole agricultural sector. It contributed to increasing participant's communication skills as well as their ability to interact with others.

Through these skills, participants will be able to pass on information more effectively in their local networks. It is also important to keep young growers coming into the industry and the best way to do this is through maintaining networks of communication.

Comment from one of the participants:

"I will be using the information I gained on the Next Gen Bus trip to have a more positive outlook and I now also have the confidence to take on some of the challenges facing our industry because I learnt that all of agriculture faces similar problems and they are all possible to overcome."

Next Gen and the participants would like to thank SRA, ACFA, and QSL for their support and the opportunity to attend this educational journey through the northern part of the Australian Sugar Industry and let's hope that we all have a safe crush.

Gerard Puglisi
Northern Director