

South Johnstone/ Mulgrave/ Tully

The season in the north just got going when over 100mm rainfall stopped the Mulgrave and Tully mills, with South Johnstone still to start at 21 June. The 2016 estimated crush is 1.63 million tonnes of cane at 84tc/h for South Johnstone 1.3 million tonnes of cane for Mulgrave mill.

Substantial rainfall in the month of May has been good for the crop and good for the water table and it got all the springs running. It is comforting to know that growers have plenty of moisture for the upcoming planting season. However, with crushing underway it would be nice to have some fine weather and the late rain now has growers concerned that this will water down the much needed value of our crops.

With extensive upgrades being carried out to the mill to increase crushing capacity, it has now been identified that the transport system also needs to be upgraded to cope with the increased demand. With 500km of track and 200 bridges in the South Johnstone supply area alone this is not a simple task. Add to this an ageing locomotive fleet and it becomes really obvious that a substantial budget is required to achieve the desired outcome. Significant planning was carried out to cover all areas from rail track and bridge repair to the reliability of existing locomotives. The \$10 million budget allocated funded to all upgrades. To achieve the desired outcome, 11 locomotives have been retro fitted with current day engines and transmissions to improve reliability. The locomotives are also being fitted with remote shunting device technology to reach the target return on investment. This allows the driver to operate the locomotive without standing in the driver's cabin, eliminating the need for two personnel to operate each locomotive. Some growers believe that this will slow the shunting process down. However, the mill trials show that shunting bins will now take the same time to complete with one man instead of two. Of course there is always an interim period of adjustment when engaging new processes but with time, the technology will only continue to improve.

Both MSF and QSL have been presenting their Grower Choice Marketing strategies and products for 2017 and beyond, to growers. There is a bit of confusion about what people should be doing and the high sugar price has put pressure on that because people want to take advantage of it. The sooner we get our On Supply Agreements between MSF and QSL settled, the easier it will be for growers to exercise their preference.

Wet Tropics Industry Report

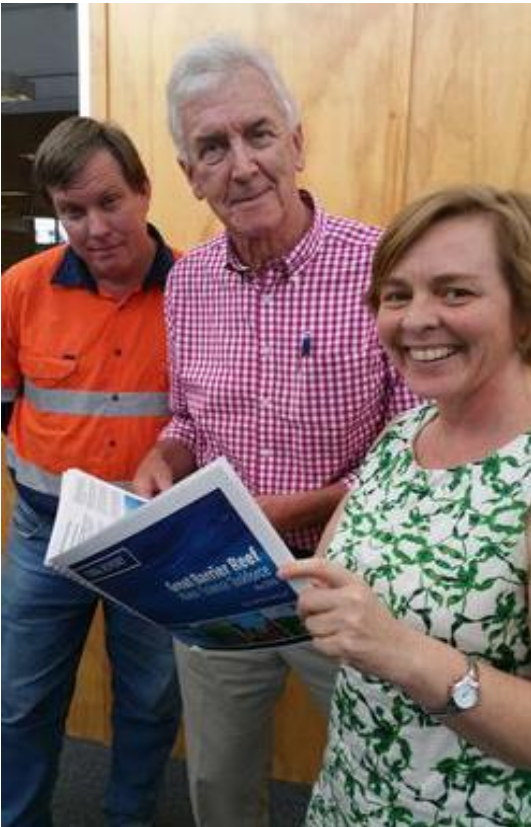
The recent release of recommendations from the Queensland Government Reef Water Science Taskforce prompted a significant gathering of industry organisations in Innisfail.

The Taskforce Chair and Chief Scientist, Dr Geoff Garrett presented the report, to the Industry Advisory Group in the Wet Tropics.

Representatives from a range of organisations, government departments and industries including Cane, Bananas, Dairy, Multi-cropping, Horticulture and Tourism, were presented the 10 key recommendations, which aim to accelerate progress towards water quality targets for a healthier reef.

Dr Garrett said, "Today we've had a robust and challenging discussion with a set of extremely helpful comments on how we take it to the next step in terms of implementation, which is where all the action is."

Greg Shannon from Tully Sugar and a member of the Wet Tropics Cane Industry Working Group at the meeting and said, "I think the important thing here is that no one's being blamed. It's a community response and community includes the agricultural sector. In the past, we've been blamed, and it puts people off-side straight away – it doesn't work."



Dr Garret said, “One of the key challenges I see for growers is the issue around data provision – farmers are faced with ongoing and escalating monitoring processes on farm. We need to explore further how we can ensure farmers can contribute their information without it being used as a big stick to come back to bite them.”

Greg said, “The take-home message for me was that we are all in this together. We’ve already got a very strong team here with Terrain and the Cane Industry Working Group and I think there’s a great opportunity here to take that forward.”

Dr Geoff Garret discussing the Reef Taskforce’s Report with Greg Shannon (Tully Sugar, Agronomist) and Carole Sweatman (Terrain NRM, CEO).

National Biological Farming Conference and Expo



Cairns Convention Centre,
28 - 30 October, 2016.

Registrations are now open for the second national biological farming conference and expo to be held at the Cairns Convention Centre in late October this year.

Biological farming encompasses a range of farming systems that enhance the life-giving capacity of the soil. Australia's most innovative farmers will converge in Cairns in October to meet with world leaders in the field of biological farming systems. This is an exciting event prompting growers and extension officers to look past the current paradigm.

Michael Camilleri
Northern Director

