

BSES Limited



**FINAL REPORT – SRDC PROJECT BSS292
INVESTIGATING MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SUGAR AND OTHER
CROPS AND ALTERNATIVE CROPPING BY THE MACKAY DISTRICT
YOUNG FARMERS’ GROUP**

**by
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SD06008**

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SUMMARY

Since 2003, the Brightly Young Farmers' group has been actively building the group's capacity in a number of areas, including:

- new farming system principles;
- alternative cropping;
- environmental issues (water runoff);
- sugar-industry organisational structures and purpose;
- marketing options for sugar and other crops; and
- new cane-payment formula (Mackay).

The increased knowledge has benefited their individual farming enterprises and allowed for a more-informed decision-making process.

The Brightly Young Farmers' group is a specialist group within the Mackay Group Extension Program. It has undertaken a previous study tour that successfully met its objectives.

The aim of this project was to investigate and develop a better understanding of:

- marketing strategies utilised in the sugar industry and other options;
- marketing strategies utilised in other industries (particularly cotton);
- developing alternative crops/options and the marketing of those crops/options.

The specific objectives were to:

- 1 Create new thinking and awareness of sugar marketing opportunities;
- 2 Investigate marketing strategies utilised in other crops;
- 3 Investigate alternatives from sugarcane;
- 4 Develop a better understanding and knowledge base for producing alternative crops;
- 5 Understand equipment and infrastructure requirements to produce alternative crops, in a number of different crops;
- 6 Create new networks for future reference.

The study tour encompassed current marketing arrangements for sugar, cotton, macadamia nuts, freshwater fish, alternative products made from sugarcane, soybeans, and peanuts, and highlighted issues that effect marketing and pricing of these products.

The study tour was highly successful in that all of the study-tour participants gained important new knowledge and understanding. The objectives of this tour were clearly met, with participants noting a desire to increase further their knowledge about sugar pricing and the role and activities of SRDC.

The highly successful nature of this study tour is proof that aligning the group members' input into the objectives, and designing the study tour to meet these objectives were factors contributing to the success of the tour. The initial planning meeting posed the objectives and these were designed and agreed upon by the group members. This process has allowed the group members to guide the direction of this study tour in the area of interest to its group members.

1.0 BACKGROUND

Since 2003, the Brightly Young Farmers' group has been actively building the group's capacity in a number of areas, including:

- new farming system principles;
- alternative cropping;
- environmental issues (water runoff);
- sugar-industry organisational structures and purpose;
- marketing options for sugar and other crops; and
- new cane-payment formula (Mackay).

The increased knowledge has benefited their individual farming enterprises and allowed for a more-informed decision-making process.

The Brightly Young Farmers' group is a specialist group within the Mackay Group Extension Program. It has undertaken a previous study tour that successfully met its objectives.

At a planning meeting in April 2005, the Brightly Young Farmers' group determined that it needed more information on a number of issues:

- new cane-payment formula;
- latest research on genetically modified sugarcane;
- other products produced from sugarcane;
- alternative and rotational crops;
- marketing options for sugar and other crops.

Creating a more-diverse farming enterprise will give these growers the ability to achieve a more-balanced income stream and long-term sustainability. The knowledge gained from exposure to marketing strategies and alternative cropping provided by a study tour will play an important role in the decision-making process of their farming enterprise and future marketing and pricing of sugar alternatives that may be utilised. The young farmers of our industry are the future managers of the industry and building their knowledge base and decision-making process is very important to deliver future direction to the industry.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this project was to investigate and develop a better understanding of:

- marketing strategies utilised in the sugar industry and other options;
- marketing strategies utilised in other industries (particularly cotton);
- developing alternative crops/options and the marketing of those crops/options.

The specific objectives were to:

- 1 Create new thinking and awareness of sugar marketing opportunities;
- 2 Investigate marketing strategies utilised in other crops;
- 3 Investigate alternatives from sugarcane;

- 4 Develop a better understanding and knowledge base for producing alternative crops;
- 5 Understand equipment and infrastructure requirements to produce alternative crops, in a number of different crops;
- 6 Create new networks for future reference.

3.0 PROCESS AND ATTENDANCE

15 young farmers and one grower-group coordinator (Figure 1) travelled from Mackay to Brisbane to visit Queensland Sugar Limited and Queensland Cotton in relation to marketing of products. They visited SRDC, CANEGROWERS, and BSES Limited for an overview of the operational structures and a tour of the facilities. The group then travelled to Nambour and visited the Cow Candy operation and facility. At Gympie, they visited Suncoast Gold (macadamia nuts) processing factory and their farm. At Childers the Ausyfish Aquaculture group were visited - they presented an overview of freshwater aquaculture industry in Childers. At Bundaberg, the group undertook field visits to Grain in Cane operations (soybean and peanut). They then returned to Mackay. Appendix 1 gives the travel itinerary.



Figure 1 Tour participants at Bundaberg

The study tour encompassed current marketing arrangements for sugar, cotton, macadamia nuts, freshwater fish, alternative product made from sugarcane, soybeans and peanuts. It highlighted issues that affect marketing and pricing of these products.

The knowledge gained by the study-tour participants will be invaluable in developing a clear understanding of the importance of commodity value fluctuations that occur and the volatility of the markets and pricing options. Marketing and pricing of commodities is something that cane growers have had little exposure to, and this study tour has endeavoured to lift the level of understanding by its participants in this area.

The study tour was designed to address the specific objectives that the group members formulated. The process was:

1. Planning meeting conducted in April 2005 highlighted the issues that the group wanted to address.
2. Group designed clear objectives to this specific study tour.
3. Study tour was designed to meet the objectives.
4. Group prepared a funding application as a SRDC Travel and Learning Opportunity Project.
5. Developed a study-tour contacts information kit.
6. Study tour contacts identified and organised to deliver and present relevant information to the study-tour participants in relation to the study-tour objectives.
7. Evaluation of the project took the form of pre- and post-tour questionnaires and a study-tour feedback sheet. This information was analysed and forms part of this report.

An information kit (Appendix 2) was developed for the study-tour participants. This included relevant information about the organisation or company being visited. This gave some basic information, and promoted questions about specific content or relevant information. The kit contained:

- A4 note book;
- Highlighter;
- Biro;
- Information about the company and organisation profiles;
- Study-tour itinerary and contact numbers;
- A4 clear case to keep this information;
- Name tag;
- Hat.

4.0 PARTICIPANTS' LEARNINGS

Learnings from the tour were determined through pre- and post-tour questionnaires (Appendix 3). In these, questions relating to the objectives and in a feedback sheet (Appendix 4) were posed to the study-tour participants, and the responses from the same question before and after the study tour were analysed from a matrix (Appendix 5) in which the responses were ranked. The results given relate to the percentage difference to the ranking given to the response from the pre- and post-tour questionnaire (Appendix 6).

The following summarises the analysis of the responses to the questionnaires and feedback sheets.

Objective 1 - Create new thinking and awareness of sugar marketing opportunities.

Question 1 - What are the main factors that influence the world sugar price?

Result: 15% improvement

Question 2 - The annual global sugar consumption is currently how many million tonnes?

Result: 53% improvement

Question 3 - Name the seven sugar terminals in Queensland.

Result: 33% improvement

Question 4 - The Queensland sugar industry is exposed to three main areas of financial risk, can you name them?

Result: 38% improvement

Question 5 - Between 4 and 5 millions tonnes of sugar is produced in Queensland annually, currently what amount is marketed by Queensland Sugar Limited?

Result: 49% improvement

Question 6 - What opportunities exist for sugarcane farmers to market their own sugar?

Result: 33% improvement

Objective 2 - Investigate marketing strategies utilised in other crops

Question 7 - What opportunities exist for cotton growers to market their own cotton?

Result: 46% improvement

Question 8 - The commodity price of any one product is normally influenced by two factors, can you name them?

Result: 23% improvement

Question 9 - When marketing any product a number of items always play a role in how successful the marketing strategies are employed, can you list some of these?

Result: 34% improvement

Objective 3 - Investigate alternatives from sugarcane

Question 10 - What would the advantages be when producing an alternative market from sugarcane compared to an alternative crop?

Result: 27% improvement

Objective 4 - Develop a better understanding and knowledge base for producing alternative crops

Objective 5 – Understand equipment and infrastructure requirements to produce alternative crops, in a number of different crops

Question 11 - When producing alternative crops, what are the main factors that would be considered? (rate the responses from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important to 5 being the most important):

- *Market strength;*
- *Infrastructure requirement;*
- *Equipment;*
- *Agronomic advice;*
- *Time commitment;*
- *Gross margin;*
- *Support to the main crop produced;*
- *Other growers producing the same alternative crop.*

This question was designed to allow the study-tour participants to examine the factors involved in making an informed decision to produce alternative crops. The difference in results from the pre-tour questionnaire to the post-tour questionnaire saw that 100% of all the response had a **change in the importance rating** that was given before being exposed to the study tour. This result highlighted that all the factors above needed careful consideration before attempting alternative crops.

Question 12 - This study tour will be investigating a number of alternative crops (macadamia nuts, aquaculture, soybeans and peanuts) How have the infrastructure requirements and equipment issues been handled? (please utilize your existing knowledge)

- a) Macadamia Nuts;*
- b) Aquaculture;*
- c) Soybeans;*
- d) Peanuts.*

Result: a) 56% improvement

Result: b) 55% improvement

Result: c) 46% improvement

Result: d) 45% improvement

Objective 6 - Create new networks for future reference

Question 13 - What is the core function of SRDC?

Result: 41% improvement

Question 14 - What is the core function of the CANEGROWERS organisation?

Result: 23% improvement

Question 15 - What is the core function of BSES Limited?

Result: 23% improvement

Question 16 - How many contacts have been made in conjunction to the visits conducted?

- Queensland Sugar Limited;
- SRDC;
- CANEGROWERS Brisbane;
- Queensland Cotton;
- BSES Limited Brisbane;
- Cow Candy;
- Suncoast Gold;
- Ausyfish;
- Grain in Cane.

Result: An average of 17 contacts for each study-tour participant made from meeting with study-tour hosts.

Feedback sheet

Question 1 - Which section of the study tour did you find most valuable for your farming business?

Question 2 - Could you explain why you found this section useful?

Results:

- 1 73.3% of the study tour participants indicated that QSL was the most valuable information for their farming business.
- 2 Interest that was generated in this area of the study tour highlighted a deficiency in knowledge of how sugar is marketed, priced, hedged – currency and commodity value, forward selling and the income generated from the trading of the commodity (sugar) as well as the actual value of the commodity.
The operation cost of QSL was also highlighted and an example was given of what transactions occurred when a sale contract was filled.
An outlook of other sugar-producing countries was also given to highlight the production levels and world consumption rates, which led to an outlook of the 2006 sugar value.
- 3 26.6% of the study-tour participants indicated that the understanding gained about the functions and activities of industry organisations developed an appreciation and a better understanding of the relevance that the different industry organisations play within our industry.
- 4 From the pre-post tour questionnaire, it was clear that the study-tour group in general increased their knowledge of the core functions of the industry organisations. Site visits and talks all contributed to the success of this component of the study tour. This certainly highlights a deficiency that could exist within growers of the core functions of the industry organisations, and the activities and services that they provide.
- 5 20% of the study-tour participants indicated that the Suncoast Gold Macadamia factory visit, followed by the farm visit, was a valuable component of the study tour. This visit was popular because it highlighted a well-organised industry, good processing facilities, excellent approach to marketing, and grower linkages and support. The processing facility also generates electricity into the power grid and showed the diversity of Suncoast Gold. Good returns at the grower and processor levels meant that the industry was in expansion mode and supported new growers extremely well. This support was in the form of information about the economics

for the producer, equipment, seedling plants and detailed agronomics of producing macadamia nuts.



Figure 2 Ian White addressing the Brightly Young Farmers' group at Queensland Sugar Limited, Brisbane



Figure 3 Dr Russell Muchow (SRDC Executive Director) and Dr Tracy Henderson (SRDC Investment Manager) discuss SRDC's operations with the Brightly Young Farmers' Group in Brisbane



Figure 4 Ian Ballantyne (CANEGROWERS General Manger) discussing CANEGROWERS-related issues at CANEGROWERS head office in Brisbane



Figure 5 Dr Kerry Nutt, BSES Limited Indooroopilly, discussing new technology with the study-tour group



Figures 6 and 7 Highlights of Ron Emerson's macadamia nut farm and some equipment utilised in the collection of macadamia nuts

Question 3 - How would you rate the overall study tour? (with 1 being least useful to 5 being most useful)

100% of the study tour participants rated the study tour at 5 (most useful).

Question 4 - Could the study tour have been improved in any area?

Results: 50% of the study tour participants said that it could not have been improved.

28.5% of participants said that they would have liked to spend more time at Queensland Sugar Limited and Sugar Research and Development Corporation.

Some general responses were:

- more time;
- less rain on the last day;
- very efficient use of time.

Question 5 - Is there any follow-up information or activity required from what you have been exposed to during this study tour?

Results: 28.5% of growers would like more information on macadamia nuts.

14.2% required more information about rotational crops (soybeans and peanuts).

21.4% would like more sugar pricing training and information.

21.4% said they did not require any further information.

Any other comments

Short responses given by study tour participants were:

- A great study tour good information has sparked new interest;
- Gathered lots of information in a short time;
- I learnt a lot and took in a lot of new information;
- Thanks Joe for all the effort you put in;
- Fantastic, more time at QSL, increased understanding of sugar industry;
- Would have to be one of the most informative study tours;
- The macadamia tour was my favourite;
- Great group of people to tour with;
- Excellent tour, "well done Joe";

- Very interesting trip;
- I'm amazed how much I have learnt, Joe Muscat has done a top job. Better understanding in a rapidly changing industry;
- Study tour very useful, all places informative, diverse range of information;
- Job well done, Joe.

The comments given in the feedback sheet are encouraging, with very positive support for this study tour.

5.0 BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY

To ensure the future of young farmers within our industry, it is imperative that their capacity continues to be increased. Our industry, like many other agricultural industries, faces a continual challenge to remain sustainable and profitable, while meeting the community expectations and the social factors that confront them.

This travel and learning opportunity succeeded in filling a knowledge gap that was highlighted by the participating growers. The study-tour evaluation clearly documents the increase knowledge that has been achieved and highlights that there is a requirement to further increase knowledge in the specific issues, such as sugar pricing options.

The process of learning from travelling, observing and talking with relevant people is an excellent way of building knowledge. The exposure to relevant people will create networks that will be utilised in the future and will assist with decision-making processes for the study-tour participants, as well as the hosts and organisations that were visited during this study tour.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study tour was highly successful in that all of the study-tour participants gained important new knowledge and understanding. The objectives of this tour were clearly met, with participants noting a desire to increase further their knowledge about sugar pricing and the role and activities of SRDC.

The highly successful nature of this study tour is proof that aligning the group members' input into the objectives, and designing the study tour to meet these objectives were factors contributing to the success of the tour. The initial planning meeting posed the objectives and these were designed and agreed upon by the group members. This process has allowed the group members to guide the direction of this study tour in the area of interest to its group members.

7.0 COMMUNICATION OF FINDINGS

The communication strategy include three articles that that have been written for *Mackay Cane News* (Appendix 7), *Bush Telegraph* (Appendix 8), and *Australian Canegrower* (Appendix 9). These articles have highlighted the activities conducted within the study tour.

A poster paper will be developed for the 2007 ASSCT conference in Cairns. This will demonstrate the study tour objectives, it evaluation and findings.

Mackay Group Extension Program, through its effective information-transfer measures, will also extend at its shed meetings an overview of this study tour. The grower study-tour participants will also extend any information to other growers, highlighting the benefits of this study tour.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge SRDC (Sugar Research and Development Corporation) and BSES Limited for collaborating to achieve the outcomes of this study tour and for providing the funding and resources to allow this project to be implemented. The 15 grower participants who attended this study tour also appreciate the opportunity to travel and learn, and special thanks goes to all the study tour hosts, the industry organizations, for their valuable time and support to this study tour. I also acknowledge the members of the Brightly Young Farmers' group for having the initiative and taking the opportunity for specifically pinpointing the knowledge gaps that existed.

APPENDIX 1 – Tour itinerary

Study Tour Itinerary

Feb 26 - Mar 2 2006

“Investigating marketing strategies and alternative cropping by the Mackay District Young Farmers’ Group”

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Travel information</i>	<i>Contact person</i>	<i>Contact numbers</i>
26/2/06 Sunday	7.45pm	Fly Mackay to Brisbane	Jetstar	
26/27 Sunday / Monday	9.00pm	Chifley on George, 103 George St, Brisbane	Greg Pleasance	0732216044
27/2/06 Monday	9.00am to 10.30am	Qld Sugar Limited North Podium Level 192 Ann Street, Brisbane	Julanne Collis	0738150100
	11.00am to 11.45am	SRDC Level 16, 141 Queen St, Brisbane	Tracy Henderson	0732100458
	11.45am to 12.15pm	Qld Canegrowers	Ian Ballantyne	0738646444
	2.00pm	Qld Cotton 55 Wyandra St Newstead	Phil Ryan	32503300 32503307 D 0419778437
28/2/06 Tuesday	8.30am to 10.00am	BSES Limited 50 Meiers Rd Indooroopilly	Dr Kerry Nutt	0733313333
	10.00am to 11.30am	Travel Brisbane to Nambour		
	11.30am to 1.30pm	Cow candy Bli Bli, Nambour	Dreuce Batestone	54485990 0438358325
	1.30pm to 3.00pm	Travel Nambour to Gympie		
	3.30pm to 5.30pm	Suncoast Gold Macadamia Nuts Gympie	Brice Kiddazt	54827599 0438861198
	6.00pm	Great Eastern Gympie 27-29 Geordie Rd Gympie	Jenny	54827288

1/3/06 Wednesday	8.00am to 9.30am	Travel Gympie to Childers		
	9.30am to 11.30am	ISIS club Childers <i>Ausyfish</i> <i>Aquaculture</i>	George Pascoe Bruce Sambell	41261516 41262226 0407797149
	12.45pm to 1.30pm	Travel Childers to Bundaberg		
	1.30 pm to 4.00pm	Grain in Cane Canegrowers Bundaberg <i>Soybean & Peanuts</i>	Mathew Lieghton	41512555 0437084035
	4.30pm	Bundaberg Rum Distillery	Kimba	41312999
	6.00pm	Sugar Country Motor Inn, 220 Bourbong St Bundaberg	Blain	41531166
2/3/06 Thursday	8.00am to 4.30pm	Travel Bundaberg to Mackay		

APPENDIX 2 – Information kit



Australian Government

Sugar Research and Development Corporation

Young Farmers Study Tour

Feb 26 to Mar 2

2006

*“Investigating marketing strategies and alternative cropping by
the Mackay District Young Farmers Group”*

Mackay Group Extension Program





Investigating marketing strategies and alternative cropping by Mackay District Young Farmers group.

AIM --> Investigate and develop a better understanding of;

- 1) Marketing strategies utilised in the sugar industry and other options
- 2) Marketing strategies utilised in other industries (particularly cotton)
- 3) Developing alternative crops and the marketing of those crops

Objectives

- 1) Create new thinking and awareness of sugar marketing opportunities
- 2) Investigate marketing strategies utilised in other crops
- 3) Investigate alternatives from sugar cane
- 4) Develop a better understanding and knowledge base for producing alternative crops
- 5) Equipment and infrastructure requirements to produce alternative crops, in a number of different crops
- 6) Create new networks for future reference

The Mackay and district young farmers group has been pro-active in building capacity of its group members for a number of years. This study tour will focus on the marketing strategies of sugar and other crops in an attempt to increase the understanding of this very important component of farming.

Queensland Sugar

Located in Brisbane, Australia, Queensland Sugar Limited is the exclusive marketer of the State of Queensland's annual raw sugar production.

Each year, the company sells the State's entire raw sugar production, on behalf of Queensland's 6500 cane growers and mill owners, to customers in Australia and around the world.

Queensland Sugar has a dedicated focus on relationship marketing and maximises efficiency by supplying raw sugar in bulk to end users, mainly refiners. Bulk orders are sold on a cost, insurance, freight (CIF) or cost and freight (CFR) landed basis.

Queensland Sugar is a company limited by guarantee, owned by the growers and millers of Queensland. The company is accountable to the industry through its 35 members - 10 mill owners, representatives of Queensland's 23 Local Mill Suppliers' Committees and one representative each from Australian Cane Farmers Association and CANEGROWERS Organisation.

Queensland Sugar's marketing history dates back to 1923 when the company's forerunner, the Sugar Board was first established to market Queensland raw sugar.

Queensland Cotton

Making Growing Easier - As a key link between the producers of raw cotton and the end users of the fibre, Queensland Cotton provides its grower customers with fully integrated services. These services include cotton ginning, classing and marketing, sale of crop inputs, precision agriculture tools, crop finance and raw cotton handling and transport. With this unique combination of specialist services, Queensland Cotton is in an unparalleled position to assist growers to produce high yielding, quality cotton in demand by spinning mills around the world.

Use the best Processor - Queensland cotton operates eight world class cotton processing plants (gins) throughout Queensland and New South Wales in Australia, and 17 gins across Arizona and California all operated by experienced ginning personnel. Our equipment undergoes stringent maintenance programs each season to ensure the best possible fibre quality is obtained. With module pads and undercover bale storage at each gin site, customers can rest assured that fibre integrity is always maintained.

Delivering the Goods - Strategically positioned in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres, Queensland Cotton is able to access a year-round supply of premium cotton for delivery to spinning mills around the globe. Our automated bale tracking system tracks individual bales through the storage and transport process ensuring the right product is delivered on time. Queensland Cotton strives to achieve consistency of product quality, delivering on time and according to specification.

Sustaining our Resources - Queensland Cotton is strongly committed to the sustainability of the cotton industry. As well as supporting local and national initiatives, the Company is investing in technological advances to assist the cotton industry to use resources more efficiently, which is better for the environment, Queensland Cotton and the cotton industry.

Suncoast Gold Macadamias (Aust) Limited

OPERATIONS

The processing plant employs the most advanced processes and technology, with our Quality Assurance Laboratory exercising continual quality control, ensuring that the high standards demanded within the industry is maintained.

A number of large, independently owned orchards are committed to supplying Suncoast Gold Macadamia (Aust) Limited...the main regional processor...with an on-going volume of macadamia nut-in-shell, enabling an increased annual output well into the future.

When the macadamia nuts arrive at the processing plant from the growers, they are in shell...the grower having already removed the outer hull and partially dried the nut-in-shell to approximately a 10% moisture content.

After spending 14 days in drying bins, where the moisture content is further reduced to a 1.5% level, the shells are cracked, the kernels are separated from the shell using both electronically and mechanically sorting methods. Finally the kernel is inspected manually to ensure that only the finest quality is included in the finished product.

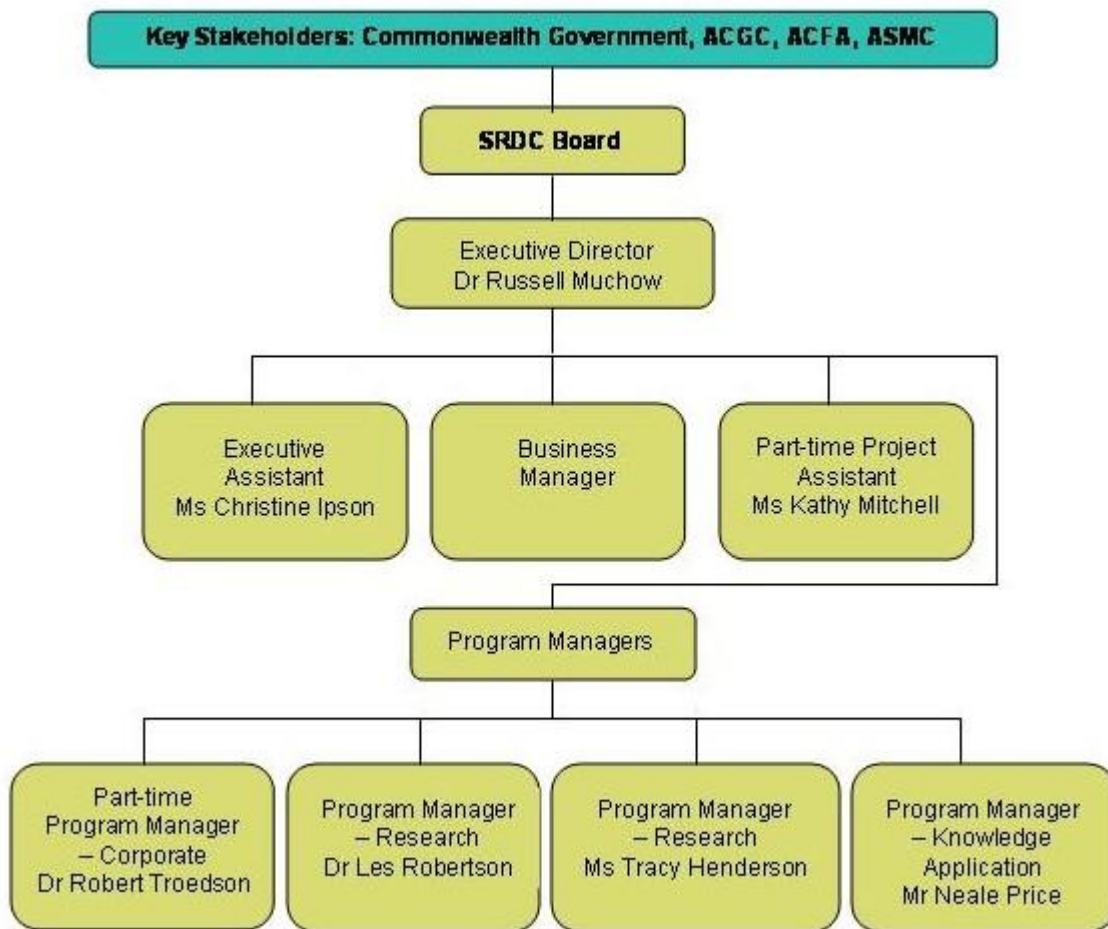
At this stage the kernels are graded and packed in multi-laminated foil packs. Using the latest technology, the air is removed from inside the packs, then gas flushed and vacuum sealed.

The kernels are packed to industry specifications, and are available in a range of wholes, halves or diced kernels...a total of thirteen styles.

In addition to the supply of bulk kernel, the company has an extensive range of value added products...including roasted, flavoured or chocolate coated lines.

Sugar Research and Development Corporation

SRDC operates under the direction of a Board which is responsible for developing the Corporation's policies, governing its operation, and monitoring its performance. The Executive Director leads the SRDC management team and is accountable to the Board for day to day operation of the Corporation.



In 2002, after careful consideration of the current state and external environment of the sugar industry and of its key drivers, industry stakeholders determined that the industry's principal priorities or needs are:

- Whole-of-industry profitability through exploitation of opportunities for better integration across the value chain to ensure enhanced revenue and increased cost efficiency
- An economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable industry that has sustainable farming, harvesting, processing, and distribution systems, and efficient and effective marketing systems for Australian sugar
- An efficient and effective Research, Development, & Extension capacity that collaborates strongly across R&D providers and with the various components of the industry value chain
- Attraction and retention of people who are talented, well trained and committed to the sugar industry

QLD CANEGROWERS ORGANISATION LTD

Our Vision

To ensure a secure and profitable future for cane growers

Our Mission

CANEGROWERS provides representation, leadership, and services, and promotes unity in the interests of its members.

Our Goals

- > Assist in maximising grower efficiency and profitability
- > Contribute to long-term industry efficiency
- > Enhance organisation effectiveness
- > Develop a positive external environment for cane growers
- > Recognise and manage diverse grower needs while maintaining organisation unity
- > Provide a foundation and structure for future industry development and planning

Our Values

- > Accountability to our members
- > A focus on issues relevant to our members
- > Credibility, integrity and professionalism
- > Open and effective communication between growers, organisation units, and external publics
- > Community consciousness and responsibility

BSES Limited

BSES - essential to profitable, sustainable sugarcane production

Sugarcane is one of Australia's most important export crops. BSES Limited is the principal provider of research, development and extension to the Australian sugar industry. Formed in 1900, BSES has a long history of applying good science to problems facing sugarcane production, and developing effective solutions that benefit the whole industry. Today, we work closely with Australian sugarcane growers, millers, harvest contractors and government to find ways to make sugarcane production more profitable and environmentally sustainable.

Thorough research, creative development and effective extension of new knowledge and technology are vital to every agricultural industry. BSES is the principal provider of research, development and extension to the Australian sugar industry.

BSES is made up of scientists, engineers, field staff, extension officers and administrative staff who work together at ensuring that Australian sugarcane remains a valuable, viable commodity.

BSES has several major programs of work, and conducts these through its stations, centers and laboratories that are located in 17 cane growing areas throughout Queensland and northern New South Wales.

APPENDIX 3 – Pre- and post-study-tour questionnaire

Question 1

What are the main factors that influence the world sugar price?

Objective 1

Question 2

The annual global sugar consumption is currently how many million tonnes?

Objective 1

Question 3

Name the seven sugar terminals in Queensland?

Objective 1

Question 4

The Queensland sugar industry is exposed to three main areas of financial risk, can you name them?

Objective 1

Question 5

Between 4 and 5 millions tonnes of sugar is produced in Queensland annually, currently what amount is marketed by Qld Sugar Limited?

Objective 1

Question 6

What opportunities exist for sugarcane farmers to market their own sugar?

Objective 1

Question 7

What opportunities exist for cotton growers to market their own cotton?

Objective 2

Question 8

The commodity price of any one product is normally influenced by two factors, can you name them?

Objective 2

Question 9

When marketing any product a number of items always play a role in how successful the marketing strategies are employed, can you list some of these?

Objective 2

Question 10

What would the advantages be when producing an alternative market from sugar cane compared to an alternative crop?

Objective 3

Question 11

When producing alternative crops what are the main factors that would be considered? (rate the responses from 1 → 5 with 1 being the least important to 5 being the most important)

Market strength ____

Infrastructure requirement ____

Equipment ____

Agronomic advice ____

Time commitment ____

Gross margin ____

Support to the main crop produced ____

Other growers producing the same alternative crop ____

Objective 4 & 5

Question 12

This study tour will be investigating a number of alternative crops. (macadamia nuts, aquaculture, soy beans, and peanuts) How have the infrastructure requirements and equipment issues been handled for each one of these crops? (please utilize your existing knowledge)

Macadamia Nuts

Aquaculture

Soybeans

Peanuts

Objective 4 & 5

Question 13

What is the core function of SRDC?

Objective 6

Question 14

What is the core function of the CANEGROWERS organisation?

Objective 6

Question 15

What is the core function of BSES Limited?

Objective 6

APPENDIX 4 – Feedback sheet

Feedback Sheet

*“Investigating marketing strategies and alternative cropping by the
Mackay District Young Farmers Group”*

Feb 26 to Mar2 2006

Question 1

Which section of the Study tour did you find most valuable for your farming business?

Question 2

Could you explain why you found this section useful?

Question 3

How would you rate the overall study tour? ____
(with 1 being least useful to 5 being most useful)

Question 4

Could the study tour have been improved in any area?

Question 5

Is there any follow up information or activity required from what you have been exposed to during this study tour?

Any other comments.

APPENDIX 5 – Evaluation of responses (Matrix)

This Matrix ranks the written responses, 1 rating relating to a poor response and a 10 rating to an excellent response.	
1 -→ No response	
2 -→ No useful information (may have missed the concept of the question)	<i>Wrong answer</i>
3 -→ Very poor comment (no reason given)	
4 -→ Poor comment (with reasons why)	<i>Partly correct</i>
5 -→ A general comment (negative approach)	
6 -→ A general comment (positive approach)	<i>Majority correct</i>
7 -→ Positive approach with some comment	
8 -→ Good comment	
9 -→ Very good comment with good ideas	<i>Correct answer</i>
10 -→ Excellent response determining a well thought out approach.	

APPENDIX 6 – Evaluation results

Brightly Young Farmers Group Study Tour Evaluation Feb - Mar 2006

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
1	Question 1 Objective 1	9	8	-10	Question 1	break crops
	Question 2 Objective 1	4	8	40	Question 2	8
	Question 3 Objective 1	3	10	70	Question 3	most useful
	Question 4 Objective 1	1	10	90	Question 4	no
	Question 5 Objective 1	4	10	60	Question 5	grain in cane material
	Question 6 Objective 1	10	10	0	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	9	10	10		
	Question 8 Objective 2	10	10	0		
	Question 9 Objective 2	1	6	50		
	Question 10 Objective 3	4	7	30		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	Most important	no change		
	11b	most important	important	change		
	11c	important	important	no change		
	11d	important	important	no change		
	11e	very important	very important	no change		
	11f	most important	most important	no change		
11g	important	most important	change			
11h	important	least important	change			
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	7	60			
12b	1	5	40			
12c	2	5	30			
12d	2	5	30			
Question 13 Objective 6	4	8	40			
Question 14 Objective 6	7	7	0			
Question 15 Objective 6	5	6	10			
Question 16 Objective 6		19				

3 from 8
change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
2	Question 1 Objective 1	8	8	0	Question 1	QSL & BSES
	Question 2 Objective 1	8	8	0	Question 2	7
	Question 3 Objective 1	10	9	-10	Question 3	most useful
	Question 4 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 4	more time at QSL & SRDC
	Question 5 Objective 1	8	9	10	Question 5	more work with SRDC
	Question 6 Objective 1	5	6	10	Comments	A great study tour
	Question 7 Objective 2	6	6	0		
	Question 8 Objective 2	10	10	0		
	Question 9 Objective 2	9	10	10		
	Question 10 Objective 3	6	9	30		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	most important	most important			
	11c	important	very important			
	11d	important	important			

4 from 8
change

11e	important	very important	
11f	very important	most important	
11g	very important	not important	
11h	important	important	
Question 12a Objective 4&5	7	7	0
12b	6	5	-10
12c	5	5	0
12d	4	5	10
Question 13 Objective 6	6	8	20
Question 14 Objective 6	7	7	0
Question 15 Objective 6	6	6	0
Question 16 Objective 6		25	

responses question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
3	Question 1 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 1	QSL
	Question 2 Objective 1	1	10	90	Question 2	8
	Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	most useful more time at QSL &SRDC
	Question 4 Objective 1	1	4	30	Question 4	No
	Question 5 Objective 1	1	9	80	Question 5	good information has sparked new interest
	Question 6 Objective 1	1	6	50	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	4	30		
	Question 8 Objective 2	10	2	-80		
	Question 9 Objective 2	1	6	50		
	Question 10 Objective 3	1	3	20		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	most important	most important			
	11c	most important	most important			
	11d	most important	most important			
	11e	most important	most important			
	11f	most important	most important			
11g	most important	most important				
11h	least important	most important				
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	5	40			
12b	1	5	40			
12c	1	2	10			
12d	1	2	10			
Question 13 Objective 6	2	8	60			
Question 14 Objective 6	5	5	0			
Question 15 Objective 6	4	9	50			
Question 16 Objective 6		22				

1 from 8 change responses question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
4	Question 1 Objective 1	4	4	0	Question 1	QSL & Qld cotton
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 2	9
	Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	most useful no, run smoothly & efficient useful information
	Question 4 Objective 1	2	2	0	Question 4	follow up on macadamia nuts
	Question 5 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 5	Gathered lots of information in a short
	Question 6 Objective 1	2	4	20	Comments	

time

Question 7 Objective 2	2	8	60
Question 8 Objective 2	10	10	0
Question 9 Objective 2	4	8	40
Question 10 Objective 3	6	6	0
Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important	
11b	very important	very important	
11c	very important	very important	
11d	very important	most important	
11e	very important	most important	
11f	most important	most important	
11g	important	important	
11h	very important	very important	
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	8	70
12b	1	6	50
12c	1	8	70
12d	1	8	70
Question 13 Objective 6	2	10	80
Question 14 Objective 6	2	10	80
Question 15 Objective 6	6	10	40
Question 16 Objective 6		9	

2 from 8
change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
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5	Question 1 Objective 1	6	6	0	Question 1	
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 2	
	Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	8	40	Question 4	
	Question 5 Objective 1	6	8	20	Question 5	
	Question 6 Objective 1	4	6	20	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	4	6	20		
	Question 8 Objective 2	10	6	-40		
	Question 9 Objective 2	4	6	20		
	Question 10 Objective 3	6	6	0		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	very important			
	11b	least important	important			
	11c	very important	not important			
	11d	important	important			
	11e	important	not important			
	11f	very important	most important			
	11g	most important	very important			
	11h	not important	least important			
	Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	8	70		
	12b	1	8	70		
	12c	4	8	40		
	12d	4	10	60		
	Question 13 Objective 6	6	10	40		
	Question 14 Objective 6	6	8	20		
	Question 15 Objective 6	4	4	0		
	Question 16 Objective 6		6			

5 from 8
change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
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6	Question 1 Objective 1	4	5	10	Question 1	QSL & Macadamia
	Question 2 Objective 1	1	6	50	Question 2	8
	Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	most useful

Question 4 Objective 1	1	4	30	Question 4	more time required at QSL & SRDC Set up meeting with SRDC I learnt a lot & took in a lot of new info. Thanks Joe for all the effort you put in.
Question 5 Objective 1	1	10	90	Question 5	
Question 6 Objective 1	1	5	40	Comments	
Question 7 Objective 2	1	5	40		
Question 8 Objective 2	1	4	30		
Question 9 Objective 2	1	8	70		
Question 10 Objective 3	1	6	50		
Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
11b	most important	important			
11c	very important	not important			
11d	most important	most important			5 from 8 change responses question 11
11e	most important	not important			
11f	most important	most important			
11g	important	very important			
11h	important	least important			
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	4	30		
12b	1	4	30		
12c	1	8	70		
12d	1	8	70		
Question 13 Objective 6	8	10	20		
Question 14 Objective 6	5	10	50		
Question 15 Objective 6	1	4	30		
Question 16 Objective 6		8			

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
7	Question 1 Objective 1	6	6	0	Question 1	QSL
	Question 2 Objective 1	1	10	90	Question 2	8
	Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	most useful
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	9	50	Question 4	planned very well
	Question 5 Objective 1	1	9	80	Question 5	Macadamia nuts
	Question 6 Objective 1	1	8	70	Comments	Fantastic, More time at QSL, increased understanding of sugar industry
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	8	70		
	Question 8 Objective 2	4	10	60		
	Question 9 Objective 2	2	8	60		
	Question 10 Objective 3	8	8	0		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	very important	most important			
	11c	very important	most important			5 from 8 change responses question 11
	11d	very important	most important			
	11e	very important	most important			
	11f	most important	most important			
	11g	very important	most important			
	11h	most important	most important			
	Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	8	70		
	12b	1	8	70		

12c	1	8	70
12d	1	6	50
Question 13 Objective 6	4	10	60
Question 14 Objective 6	8	6	-20
Question 15 Objective 6	5	10	50
Question 16 Objective 6		19	

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
8	Question 1 Objective 1	6	7	10	Question 1	QSL 9 most useful the tour was well planned macadamia Would have to be one of the most informative study tours. The macadamia tour was my favorite, great group of people to tour with.
	Question 2 Objective 1	1	9	80	Question 2	
	Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	7	30	Question 4	
	Question 5 Objective 1	5	8	30	Question 5	
	Question 6 Objective 1	1	5	40	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	4	30		
	Question 8 Objective 2	2	10	80		
	Question 9 Objective 2	3	9	60		
	Question 10 Objective 3	6	9	30		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	most important	most important			
	11c	very important	most important			
	11d	very important	most important			
	11e	most important	most important			
	11f	most important	most important			
11g	most important	most important				
11h	most important	most important				
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	10	90			
12b	1	10	90			
12c	1	10	90			
12d	1	9	80			
Question 13 Objective 6	4	10	60			
Question 14 Objective 6	5	10	50			
Question 15 Objective 6	5	10	50			
Question 16 Objective 6		18				

2 from 8
change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
9	Question 1 Objective 1	3	6	30	Question 1	pretty much everything 8 most useful no no Excellent tour "well done Joe "
	Question 2 Objective 1	1	8	70	Question 2	
	Question 3 Objective 1	4	10	60	Question 3	
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	6	20	Question 4	
	Question 5 Objective 1	1	10	90	Question 5	
	Question 6 Objective 1	1	2	10	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	9	80		
	Question 8 Objective 2	1	10	90		
	Question 9 Objective 2	1	9	80		
	Question 10 Objective 3	1	9	80		

Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important	
11b	most important	most important	
11c	important	very important	
11d	very important	very important	
11e	most important	very important	
11f	very important	very important	
11g	important		
11h	important	very important	
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	5	40
12b	1	7	60
12c	1	4	30
12d	1	4	30
Question 13 Objective 6	4	10	60
Question 14 Objective 6	4	8	40
Question 15 Objective 6	5	9	40
Question 16 Objective 6		25	

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change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
10	Question 1 Objective 1	4	6	20	Question 1	QSL, SRDC, different crops & R&D 8 most useful This tour was good; Joe Muscat was very efficient in his role. We had a good mix of people on tour. QSL, SRDC & alternative crops Very Interesting trip
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	4	20	Question 2	
	Question 3 Objective 1	7	10	30	Question 3	
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	2	-20	Question 4	
	Question 5 Objective 1	10	10	0	Question 5	
	Question 6 Objective 1	5	5	0	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	2	5	30		
	Question 8 Objective 2	4	10	60		
	Question 9 Objective 2	9	9	0		
	Question 10 Objective 3	8	9	10		
Question 11a Objective 4&5	not important	most important				
11b	important	most important				
11c	important	most important				
11d	most important	most important				
11e	most important	most important				
11f	least important	most important				
11g	most important	most important				
11h	important	most important				
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	7	60			
12b	1	7	60			
12c	1	8	70			
12d	1	8	70			
Question 13 Objective 6	10	10	0			
Question 14 Objective 6	10	10	0			
Question 15 Objective 6	10	10	0			
Question 16 Objective 6		22				

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change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
11	Question 1 Objective 1	4	6	20	Question 1	SRDC, BSES, mostly the whole trip

Question 2 Objective 1	2	8	60	Question 2	9
Question 3 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 3	most useful
Question 4 Objective 1	4	10	60	Question 4	less rain on the last day
Question 5 Objective 1	2	10	80	Question 5	yes, soybeans
Question 6 Objective 1	1	9	80	Comments	
Question 7 Objective 2	1	7	60		
Question 8 Objective 2	1	10	90		
Question 9 Objective 2	1	6	50		
Question 10 Objective 3	5	9	40		
Question 11a Objective 4&5	very important	very important			
11b	most important	most important			
11c	most important	very important			
11d		very important			
11e	important	very important			
11f	very important	very important			
11g					
11h	important	very important			
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	6	50		
12b	1	8	70		
12c	6	6	0		
12d	6	6	0		
Question 13 Objective 6	7	6	-10		
Question 14 Objective 6	6	6	0		
Question 15 Objective 6	6	8	20		
Question 16 Objective 6		16			

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change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
12	Question 1 Objective 1	4	6	20	Question 1	QSL
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	8	60	Question 2	8
	Question 3 Objective 1	7	10	30	Question 3	most useful
	Question 4 Objective 1	2	10	80	Question 4	more time
	Question 5 Objective 1	1	7	60	Question 5	no
	Question 6 Objective 1	5	9	40	Comments	I'm amazed how much I have learn't, Joe Muscat has done a top job.better understanding in a rapidly changing industry
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	10	90		
	Question 8 Objective 2	1	6	50		
	Question 9 Objective 2	8	10	20		
	Question 10 Objective 3	1	10	90		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	very important	very important			
	11c	important	important			
	11d	very important	most important			
	11e	very important	important			
	11f	important	very important			
	11g	important	important			
	11h	very important	very important			
	Question 12a Objective 4&5	2	8	60		

3 from 8
change
responses
question 11

12b	1	6	50
12c	1	7	60
12d	1	7	60
Question 13 Objective 6	2	9	70
Question 14 Objective 6	5	9	40
Question 15 Objective 6	6	6	0
Question 16 Objective 6		8	

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
13	Question 1 Objective 1	6	6	0	Question 1	Macadamia nuts
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	8	60	Question 2	6
	Question 3 Objective 1	10	10	0	Question 3	most useful
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	7	30	Question 4	no
	Question 5 Objective 1	7	7	0	Question 5	more information on macadamia nuts
	Question 6 Objective 1	6	6	0	Comments	Study tour very useful, all places informative
	Question 7 Objective 2	2	6	40		
	Question 8 Objective 2	2	2	0		
	Question 9 Objective 2	8	8	0		
	Question 10 Objective 3	8	8	0		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	not important	very important			
	11c	important	very important			
	11d	important	very important			
	11e	not important	very important			
	11f	very important	most important			
11g	most important	very important				
11h	least important	important				
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	8	70			
12b	1	8	70			
12c	7	8	10			
12d	7	8	10			
Question 13 Objective 6	4	10	60			
Question 14 Objective 6	6	10	40			
Question 15 Objective 6	6	6	0			
Question 16 Objective 6		9				

7 from 8
change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
14	Question 1 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 1	QSL
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 2	9
	Question 3 Objective 1	8	10	20	Question 3	most useful
	Question 4 Objective 1	4	10	60	Question 4	no looking at a contrast of different industries has been excellent
	Question 5 Objective 1	6	10	40	Question 5	
	Question 6 Objective 1	2	9	70	Comments	diverse range of information
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	9	80		
	Question 8 Objective 2	10	10	0		
	Question 9 Objective 2	10	10	0		
	Question 10 Objective 3	8	10	20		
Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important				

11b	most important	most important	
11c	important	not important	
11d	important	very important	
11e	important	not important	
11f	most important	very important	
11g	least important	very important	
11h	least important	important	
Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	7	60
12b	1	8	70
12c	1	8	70
12d	1	7	60
Question 13 Objective 6	4	4	0
Question 14 Objective 6	6	7	10
Question 15 Objective 6	6	7	10
Question 16 Objective 6		23	

6 from 8
change
responses
question 11

Grower	Questions & Objectives	Pre tour rating	Post tour rating	Improvement	Feedback Questions	Feed Back
15	Question 1 Objective 1	2	6	40	Question 1	QSL 8 most useful no. It was well organised.good tolook at other industries Job well done. Joe
	Question 2 Objective 1	2	8	60	Question 2	
	Question 3 Objective 1	8	10	20	Question 3	
	Question 4 Objective 1	7	10	30	Question 4	
	Question 5 Objective 1	5	10	50	Question 5	
	Question 6 Objective 1	1	6	50	Comments	
	Question 7 Objective 2	1	6	50		
	Question 8 Objective 2	10	10	0		
	Question 9 Objective 2	9	9	0		
	Question 10 Objective 3	8	8	0		
	Question 11a Objective 4&5	most important	most important			
	11b	most important	very important			
	11c	most important	most important			
	11d	most important	very important			
	11e	most important	most important			
	11f	most important	most important			
	11g	least important	very important			
	11h	least important	very important			
	Question 12a Objective 4&5	1	8	70		
	12b	1	8	70		
	12c	1	8	70		
	12d	1	8	70		
	Question 13 Objective 6	4	10	60		
	Question 14 Objective 6	6	10	40		
	Question 15 Objective 6	4	8	40		
	Question 16 Objective 6		27			

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change
responses
question 11

	Questions & Objectives	Improvement %
Average of Results	Question 1 Objective 1	15
Average of Results	Question 2 Objective 1	53
Average of Results	Question 3 Objective 1	33
Average of Results	Question 4 Objective 1	38
Average of Results	Question 5 Objective 1	49
Average of Results	Question 6 Objective 1	33
Average of Results	Question 7 Objective 2	46
Average of Results	Question 8 Objective 2	23
Average of Results	Question 9 Objective 2	34
Average of Results	Question 10 Objective 3	27
Average of Results	Question 12a Objective 4&5	56
Average of Results	12b	55
Average of Results	12c	46
Average of Results	12d	45
Average of Results	Question 13 Objective 6	41
Average of Results	Question 14 Objective 6	23
Average of Results	Question 15 Objective 6	23
Number of contacts made	Question 16 Objective 6	17

APPENDIX 7 – *Mackay Cane News* article

Mackay Group Extension Program



The Mackay Group extension Program is now entering the next phase of its life from what was known as the Prosper Project. The Prosper project finished its life in June 2005 and was a state wide run project which was funded by SRDC and BSES Limited. This project in the Mackay region set the foundation of the newly funded Project called ***“The Mackay Area Group Extension Program”***. This is potentially a 3 year project funded by Mackay Sugar and BSES Limited and is jointly operated by BSES Mackay and MAPS (Mackay Area Productivity Services)

The group extension program has recently conducted a round of shed meetings, being one of the most successful rounds of shed meetings to date with approximately 30% of all growers attending these meetings. The MGEP will operate with a formal evaluation program and will evaluate on an outcomes base evaluation utilizing numerous methods to do this, so keep an eye out. This program operates with 4 extension teams that are made up 2 Maps Staff and 1 BSES and together work with 34 grower groups through out the Mackay Sugar area.

We have a number of specialist groups that operate in our region and these groups work away at a specific issue and are normally not geography aligned. One such group is the Brightly Young Farmer group who has a main objective of building capacity for its members.

Recently the Brightly Young Farmers Group under took a Study tour called ***“Investigating marketing strategies and alternative cropping by Mackay District Young Farmers group.”*** This study tour was highly successful in achieving its outcomes.



Ian White Queensland Sugar Limited addresses The Brightly Young farmers Group in Brisbane, Travel and Learning opportunity funded by SRDC and BSES Limited.

We were also successful in another Travel and Learning project to take 50 growers to the ASSCT conference held in Mackay May 2-5 2006. This project was funded by SRDC (Sugar Research and Development Corporation), Mackay Sugar, and BSES Limited.

The aim of the project was to build capacity of around 50 Mackay district grower group hosts, young farmers group and women canegrowers network Mackay district group by attending the ASSCT conference in May 2006

Objectives

- 1) Create awareness of the latest research and development in the sugar industry.
- 2) Generate new thinking and more informed decision making for grower hosts young farmers and Women network group in the Mackay district.
- 3) Promotion of the ASSCT conference, and future attendance to conferences to build capacity of grower group hosts and young farmers.
- 4) Extending conference information to growers within their discussion groups.
- 5) Give the opportunity to meet industry people from outside the region, creating new networks.
- 6) Improved linkages and relationships between Mackay district growers and the research and development sector.

The project objectives have been successfully met in relation to building capacity of growers towards the ASSCT conference from the feedback that was received. It was very encouraging that the 100% of the growers that attended the conference of which 30% filled out a feedback sheet indicated that they would attend another conference into the future. Certainly encouraging growers to attend the ASSCT conference offers some challenges, once these growers attend there is a real appreciation for the information that is on offer. Exposure to the researchers and extension people are also breaking down the age old barriers of growers talking with researchers.

I would recommend that encouraging growers to attend the ASSCT conference is ongoing and if this is achieved then there is a much higher appreciation for the research being conducted and the issues that are involved to achieving good outcomes and results.

The Wide Swath Harvesting group is another specialist group and late last year conducted a trip to investigate two row harvesting and two in one's operating in the north. Members of this group will be conducting a state wide workshop to be held in Mackay on May 6th to investigate the potential of the following;

1. To establish a program to quantify the value chain benefits of wide swath harvesting.
2. Promote the benefits of wide swath harvesting to the sugar industry.



David Cox 2 row Harvester

Mackay Fibre Producers are also a specialist grower group within the MGEP. This year this group has 48 hectares of Kenaf planted on 7 different farms. These crops were planted in early December and were harvested in May this year. The group is pro-actively encouraging a Japanese Base company to establish a fibre processing plant in Mackay. Mackay Fibre Producers and MGEP have hosted a field day which delivered an update of trial information and was to display harvesting of Kenaf with a cane harvester and a field walk. Thanks to Lawrence and Josie Bugeja for hosting this field on their property.



Kenaf planted beside Sugar Cane at Lawrence Bugeja's property Marian



Harvesting Kenaf at J, J & AF Muscat's property May 9th 2006

Two other groups operating in the Mackay region are the Septimus Farming Group and the North Coast Grower Group, both of these groups have been successful in attracting SRDC funding to conduct specific work directly aligned to Controlled traffic farming and the Yield Decline Joint Venture principals. These groups along with the MGEP and Mackay Rural Supplies hosted 67 growers on an information Bus Trip which was very successful and were exposed to the work plans that these groups currently operate in.



The MGEP also linked up with Sarina Sustainable Farmers group and Landmark to host an information bus trip to Ililbilie (Mike and Shane Smith). The agenda on this bus trip was an update on variable rate technology, presentation delivered by Brian Stevens on elevator extensions, comparative variety trial on 1.8m row spacing, and a zero till planting trial with a lunch at the Koumala hotel that went over very well.



Mike Smith Ililbilie talks to Mackay growers about his zero till trial.

Currently a number of grower groups have taken the opportunity to apply for SRDC funding to conduct specific work in their local area with eight more groups in the Mackay region being successful. These projects are highlighted as follows:

- Improving soil health in undulating, dryland farms in the Central region
- Increasing Productivity & Profitability in solider fly effected crops in the Pioneer Valley.
- Bed forming utilising GPS guidance by the CAS (Calen and St Helen) Young Farmers Association
- Utilising Available Technology to Better Manage Yield Variability Within Blocks
- Nutrient Management from Variable Rate Technology in a Control Traffic System by the Oakenden Grower Group.
- Beach Sand to Black Clay – Adapting technology & best practice for Homebush farming conditions
- Optimising Benefits of GPS Integration into Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF) System
- Validation of fibre cropping in rotation with sugar cane by Mackay Fibre Producers

Congratulations to all the growers within these groups that are taking a proactive roll to enhance their farming business and the sugar industry.

Group extension is utilized successfully in many industries and is really starting to take effect in the Sugar Industry. One of the out standing effects of group extension is the ability for a group of growers to take new technology and apply this on the ground. Growers are certainly practitioners and if they identify a benefit in that technology will do all that is required to make it work for them.

If you require any further information on any component of this article please contact me

Joe Muscat
BMP Officer BSES Limited Mackay

APPENDIX 8 – *Bush Telegraph Mackay* article

MEMBERS of the reunited Mackay District Young Farmers Group on tour are, from left, Steven Said, Andrew Vassallo, Sheree Vassallo, John Werner, Sandra Said, Joe Muscat, Shane Sievers, Angela Blackburn, Sam Deguara, Lee Blackburn, Bernadette Sievers, Chris Blackburn, Mark Craig, Dianne Niel, Steven Niel and Kim Craig.

Picture: Contributed.

Young farmers take trip

MACKAY District Young Farmers Group is passionate about the future of the sugar industry.

Following two years of near dormant activity, the group reunited in February last year to participate in a study tour of Far North Queensland.

This year they've hit the road again, this time heading south to take in the city lights at Brisbane and the surrounding areas before heading home via Bundaberg.

BSES extension officer Joe Muscat, the group's grower coordinator, said the young farmers were motivated by a desire to enhance their own capacity for change by working together to create opportunities.

"Exposure to complementary cropping including soybean and peanut rotations featured heavily and a tour through Cowcandy headquarters near Nambour was a sweetener for group participants," Mr Muscat said.

And a trip to Bundaberg isn't complete without a visit to the Bundaberg Rum Distillery.

Young growers agreed the highlights of the trip included visits to marketing giants, Queensland Sugar and Queensland Cotton.

"These meetings gave the group an insight into the marketing strategies used by the sugar and cotton industries and greatly contributed to strengthening the link between farmer and marketer," he said.

"Our group appreciated the opportunity to learn about the marketing aspects of the industry as it is an area where most of us have had only limited exposure."

Both trips were funded by SRDC in partnership with the young farmers group and BSES Ltd. Group members were able to express their gratitude to SRDC in person on the trip.

The group met with SRDC executive director Russell Muchow and investment managers Tracy Henderson, Robert Troedson and Les Robertson.

For further information about the Mackay District Young Farmers Group phone Joe Muscat on 4954 5100 or email jmuscat@bSES.org.au.

APPENDIX 9 – Australian Canegrower article

THE FUTURE

Study tours reunite Mackay Young Growers Group

By Sarah Miotto

Mackay District Young Farmers Group is passionate about the future of the sugar industry.

Following two years of near-dormant activity, the group reunited to undertake a study tour to Far North Queensland in February 2005.

BSES Extension Officer Joe Muscat, the group's grower coordinator, said the young farmers were motivated by a desire to enhance their capacity for change by working together to create opportunities.

The FNQ tour, jointly funded by Sugar Research and Development Corporation (SRDC) and BSES Limited, was the catalyst the group needed to trigger future interaction and activities and was deemed a great success.

Group member Andrew Vassallo said the trip provided an insight into the benefits of controlled traffic farming and the use of break crops.

"Personally, it was good to speak with growers who have been using a controlled traffic farming system for a number of years and to appreciate the benefits of a good fallow crop such as soybean," Andrew said.

Visits with growers in the Burdekin, Ingham and Gordonvale regions provided exposure to a range of farming systems, including those with controlled traffic and rotational cropping.

A tour of the plant breeding facilities at BSES Meringa also gave the group an understanding of the selection process undertaken when breeding new varieties.

The highlight of the trip was meeting and socialising with members of the Ingham-based Herbert River Young Farmers Group. Following formal proceedings, there were plenty of stories shared in forging a strong link with the farmers from the north.



Mackay District Young Farmers (front row left to right): Therese Vassallo, Sandra Said, Angela Blackburn, Lee Blackburn, Chris Blackburn, Diane Neil, Kim Craig (back row) Steven Said, Andrew Vassallo, John Werner, Joe Muscat, Shane Sievers, Sam Deguara, Bernadette Sievers, Mark Craig and, Steven Neil.



In February 2006, the group was back on the road. Venturing south this time, the group took in the city lights of Brisbane and surrounding areas, before heading home via Bundaberg.

Exposure to complementary cropping including soybean and peanut rotations featured heavily and a tour through Cow Candy headquarters near Nambour was a sweetener for group participants. A trip to Bundaberg isn't complete without a visit to the Bundaberg Rum Distillery (for educational purposes, of course)!

Other highlights of this trip were visits to marketing giants Queensland Sugar and Queensland Cotton. These meetings gave the group an insight into the marketing strategies used by the sugar and cotton industries and greatly contributed to strengthening the link between farmer and marketer.

"Our group appreciated the opportunity to learn about the marketing aspects of the industry as it is an area where most of us have had

only limited exposure," Joe Muscat said.

Group members were able to express their gratitude to SRDC in person on this most recent trip. Meeting with SRDC Executive Director Russell Muchow and Investment Managers Tracy Henderson, Robert Troedson and Les Robertson was a vital component of the itinerary.

"It is important for SRDC to hear directly from growers about their research needs", SRDC Investment Manager, Tracy Henderson said.

"SRDC greatly appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with members of the Mackay District Young Farmers Group and are looking forward to working with this group and other innovative grower groups in the future."

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