

Cairns grower Mark Savina says QCANESelect™ can be a useful tool to assist variety selection.



SRA optimises sugarcane variety selection with QCANESelect™

Optimising sugarcane variety selection for different soil types, environments and management targets will maximise productivity and profit for growers and millers. By Roderick Fletcher and Brad Pfeffer

QCANESelect™, found on the SRA website at <http://tools.sugarresearch.com.au/QCANESelect>, was developed to provide growers with interactive, up-to-date advice and information on varieties for their individual situations.

Growers can define the soil type, diseases of concern and management options and get recommendations for an individual block or for their whole farm. The system also provides variety information sheets that are linked to the SRA plant breeding database with live updates if new information is entered into the database.

QCANESelect™ provides reports in a range of formats on actual variety performance from mill statistics. On-going development has been facilitated by an SRA funded project led by SRA Principal Researcher Dr Joanne Stringer called *Optimising productivity and variety recommendations through analysis of mill data*. Recent developments from this project have improved the variety performance reports for Herbert, Burdekin, Plane

Creek, Tully, Mackay, Mulgrave and South Johnstone mills. The new variety performance reports allow users to examine variety performance by sub-district, crop class and by soil type.

By examining actual performance, growers and advisors can make better recommendations and better farming decisions. QCANESelect™ is widely used by advisors and growers and has been heavily promoted by SRA.

An SRA survey of growers earlier this year found that 91 percent of growers have heard of QCANESelect™ and 66 percent are using it. This presents an opportunity for the one third of growers who are not using to make the most of this valuable tool.

Cairns grower Mark Savina uses QCANESelect™ usually in about April each year when he is determining which varieties to plant.

"The advice provided by the productivity boards is useful, but QCANESelect™ can

provide more detail around how a variety may perform in relation to Pachymetra or ratoon stunting disease, which I need," he said. "It provides not just information on tonnes per hectare, but a lot more intricacies on performance across a range of factors for your situation."

Mr Savina said it was also especially useful for his farming business, where he operates multiple farms in a business partnership. While he has 30 years of knowledge for his home farm on the northern outskirts of the city, he also operates nine lease farms with a business partner, where the historic knowledge and performance of these properties is much less and spans as little as four or five years.

"We have soil maps for these farms, so it is very helpful in that situation for example when matching a variety to a soil type," Mr Savina said.

"I also find it useful being able to look at varieties that we don't have and see how they perform in other regions."