

# Approved, Released and Recommended Varieties

## *What is the difference?*

This information sheet explains:

- The terms *approved*, *released* and *recommended* when referring to sugarcane varieties in Queensland.
- The organisations that are involved in the successful approval, release and recommendation of new varieties

### Summary of terms

#### Approved varieties

Sugarcane varieties are approved for planting and ratooning by the Chief Executive of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Queensland (DAFFQ) under state government legislation<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of the approval is to stop the spread of serious diseases that may cause severe losses to the industry. It is an offence to plant a variety that is not approved for planting and ratooning.

Varieties are approved for one or a number of Pest Quarantine Areas (PQAs) which cover the main sugarcane growing regions. When a variety is found to have a serious disease problem, it may be removed from the list of varieties approved for planting and ratooning and be placed on a list of varieties approved for ratooning only.

This allows the industry to transition out of the variety in an orderly manner. Varieties on the list for ratooning only should not be planted. This 'ratooning only' status applied to many smut susceptible varieties after smut was found in Queensland in 2006.

#### Blanket approval

Blanket approval of varieties refers to varieties that have been approved by DAFFQ for all PQAs.

#### Released varieties

Released varieties are varieties that have been approved for the region and planting material has been distributed to growers. Planting material of new varieties is usually distributed from productivity service group seed plots on behalf of Sugar Research Australia. In some regions, productivity service groups organise the distribution of new varieties as tissue culture plantlets.

#### Recommended varieties

Recommended varieties are varieties that Sugar Research Australia, local productivity service groups and Variety Adoption Committees (VACs) recommend to growers as the most productive varieties for their region.

### How do varieties become approved and recommended in my region?

The SRA Plant Breeding program is designed to identify varieties that have genetic traits – for example, CCS, TCH – that add value to the sugarcane industry. The varieties are compared in trials to the major commercial varieties in the region over 8-10 years and must be equal to or better than the commercial varieties to be considered for approval.

The SRA Plant Breeding team review the yield performance and disease resistance of the varieties from selection trials in each region. They tentatively select the best varieties for possible release based on productivity, disease resistance and sugar and fibre quality. The information on these varieties is then presented at the regional VAC meetings.

Varieties are also rigorously tested and selected for their resistance to diseases. Varieties must meet minimum standards for disease resistance to be considered for approval by DAFFQ. These minimum standards are recommended to DAFFQ by the local VACs and are reviewed on a regular basis. VACs are made up of representatives from grower and milling groups and local advisors in the region. Sugar Research Australia submits a report on disease resistance trials for each new variety for assessment by DAFFQ when a variety is being considered for approval.

The **VACs** in each of the five regions (Northern, Herbert, Burdekin, Central and Southern) review the data and make the decision on the varieties that they would like submitted to DAFFQ for approval.

Based on endorsements by the regional VACs, together with SRA disease information, **DAFFQ** assesses the application for approval of the new varieties. Once approvals have been given, varieties can be **released** to growers for commercial planting and ratooning.

In recent years DAFFQ has approved new varieties across all PQAs in Queensland if they meet the minimum diseases resistance standards for all PQAs. When this approval is given it is called a **blanket approval**. This system allows growers to plant any approved variety that they believe may be suitable for their farm even if it has been selected for another region. Growers should discuss the performance of a variety they are interested in with their local productivity service group as they may have data that will help the grower determine if it is suitable for their farm. They should also ask them how to obtain planting material to ensure that they follow the correct quarantine procedures when moving planting material between PQAs.

When approval is given by DAFFQ for varieties in a given PQA, the varieties can be **released**. Each year SRA staff and VACs meet to review the performance of all varieties including the newly approved varieties. They also make recommendations

on the best varieties for each of the different soil types and environments in a region. The varieties they rank as the best for productivity in the region are known as recommended varieties. The lists of **recommended** varieties for each region are available on QCANSelect™ and in SRA and productivity service group publications.

As new varieties are approved, released and recommended, some older varieties may be taken off the recommended list. Such varieties are still approved and can legally be planted and ratooned. They are however no longer recommended because better varieties are available.

<sup>1</sup> *Plant Protection Act 1989, Plant Protection Regulation 2002 and Plant Protection (Approved Sugarcane Varieties) Declaration 2003* – for more details go to <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/P/PlantProApDc03.pdf>

