



Optimising CCS at harvest

Farm management decisions for maximising profit don't always mean spending extra money.

By Roderick Fletcher, Adoption Officer, Meringa

Variety selection is complex, with many considerations around risk and reward. Selecting varieties for specific sugar maturity profiles, and planting and harvesting them for optimal CCS maturity at the time of harvest can make a significant difference to your farm profit.

Varieties have distinct sugar accumulation curves. Consequently, it is important to grow a range of early-, mid- and late-season varieties to ensure high CCS is maintained throughout your harvest schedule. In the example (Figure 1), harvesting an early-sugar variety late in the season, or a later-maturing variety early in the season, can cost as much as 3.5 CCS units.

Information to help with decision-making on variety selection can be found in QCANESelect™ or the SRA Variety Guides.

SRA has developed the electronic information and decision-making tool QCANESelect™ that makes finding the best available variety maturity profile information easier.

SRA also publishes variety guides as a convenience for those unable to access online information. In QCANESelect™, you can find a combination of information tools that are derived from either analysed mill data, SRA trial information, or information provided by local variety development groups.

The Tully Variety Management Group (TVMG) is working closely with SRA on sugar maturity profiles for new varieties. The group is led by Greg Shannon (Cane Productivity Manager at Tully Sugar Limited (TSL)) who since 2013 has been conducting site-specific fortnightly CCS maturity trends on new varieties over four to six sites in the Tully region. All sites include commercial standards e.g. Q208[®]. The sites are planted by growers who are part of the TVMG.

"Tully Cane Productivity Services Limited (TCP SL) and TSL are supportive of this work as the information is then fed back into QCANESelect™ recommendations, allowing both TSL and TCP SL to give growers the best advice on new SRA varieties, using local data," Mr Shannon said.

"This is building better information profiles for new varieties in the region to fast-track their adoption."

In the Tully region, Farm Manager at Mackay Farms, Warrami, Bill Boyge explained variety selection maturity planning he does for the farm given the recent extended harvest seasons due to the amount of tonnes in the region.

"Late season varieties are standard, Q208[®] and Q200[®]; mid-season varieties are usually my plant, first ratoon and varieties that I am trialling," he said. "I'm really looking for something to add to my early varieties and after considering some of the information I've reviewed, I'm looking to Q250[®] to replace some of my KQ228[®]."

Mr Boyge receives his information from TCP SL, and also uses QCANESelect™.

"I find it very useful even though I'm very new to computers. I like to print out information from QCANESelect™ and put it in a folder I keep for varieties."

Figure 1: Generic example of early, mid and late seasonal sugar profiles for varieties Q231[®], Q200[®] and Q183[®] compared against the mill average. It shows the varieties milled CCS recorded over harvest duration.

Maximise the tonnes of sugar per hectare by selecting varieties by seasonal sugar profiles

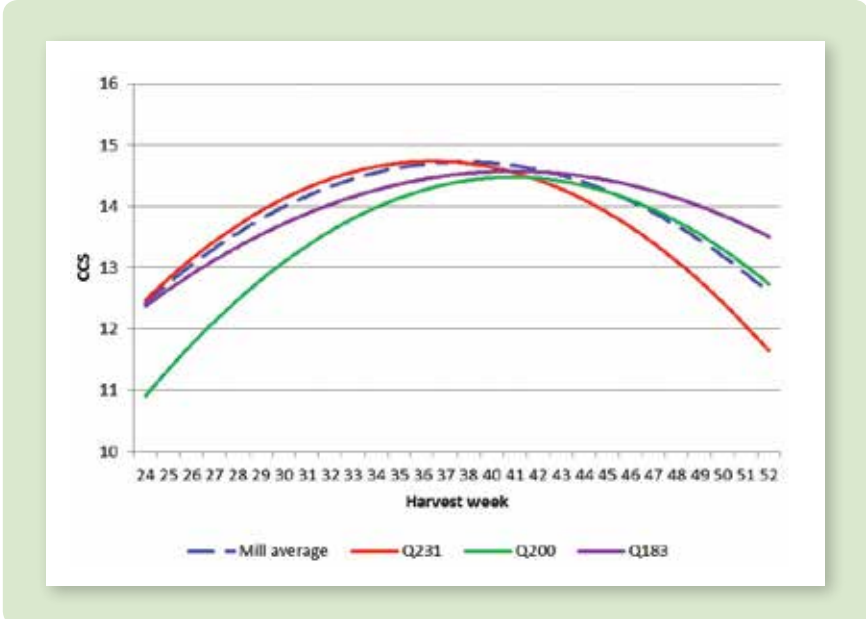


Figure 2: Suggested Harvest Period Table for northern coastal region which can be generated from the Variety Information Page on QCANESelect™. This table is often used and important for new varieties with no mill data.

Always plant a mix of early-, mid- and late-season varieties to maximise the CCS of harvested cane throughout the harvesting season



Figure 3: Graph showing weekly CCS against weekly supply in 2015 of Q200[®] across whole of Tully mill area. It shows growers are harvesting Q200[®] at the right time to maximise their profits. (Note that Tully had an abnormal season in 2015 where harvesting continued in Tully till January). This graph was generated using the regional reporting page on QCANESelect™.

