

Two percent ethanol mandate on the agenda

The Queensland Government has announced a renewed push for biofuels in the State, in a move that has potential to yield benefits for sugarcane millers and growers.

The Government released a biofuels discussion paper in June 2015 and as part of the discussion paper signalled plans to revive plans of former governments to have more ethanol blended fuels in petrol bowsers across Queensland.

The discussion paper has suggested a two percent mandate for ethanol, which equates to about 59 million litres per annum, with the relatively small figure aimed at allowing a chance for production and distribution to increase. It would be effective from July 1, 2016.

Future increases would be reviewed by the new Queensland Productivity Commission.

Importantly, the State Government also flagged the opportunities for overlap with work in bio-refineries. Sugar Research Australia (SRA) is already leading the charge with

biorefineries research via the *Rural R&D for Profit* program.

According to the discussion paper: 'Bio-manufacturing is seen as a major global growth opportunity and Queensland, with its tropical/sub-tropical climate, technically advanced agriculture sector, and large biomass supply is well placed to benefit.'

'It can also significantly value-add to agricultural outputs and create new revenue streams for agricultural producers,' the discussion paper stated. 'The Queensland Government is keen to take a proactive approach to help develop the bio-manufacturing industry.'

The State Government has conducted a series of public forums on the proposed policies, and has received encouraging feedback from the Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC), CANEGROWERS, and the RACQ.

A number of SRA-funded projects are underway relating to value-adding, particularly under Key Focus Area (KFA) six, product diversification and value addition.

This includes the aforementioned biorefineries project, and other products that look at using mill by-products for use in products such as paper or concrete.

Recent work at QUT developed three sets of equipment to measure bagasse material behaviours relevant to bagasse degradation and spontaneous combustion.

Outputs of the project will assist in the improved design and management of large stockpiles, enabling year-round reliable delivery of high quality bagasse feedstock to sugar industry power and biofuel projects.



Left: The Queensland Government's biofuels agenda has potential benefits for sugarcane millers and growers.