

# Variety management: a local industry approach



*The Tully Variety Management group (TVMG) is a local industry initiative for promoting adoption of new varieties. By Greg Shannon, TSL, and Gavin Rodman, SRA*

The TVMG was established in 2012 by Tully Sugar Limited (TSL) with assistance from TCPSL and SRA, with the objective of taking new or recently released SRA varieties, and fine tuning local recommendations in relation to:

1. Germination characteristics
2. Maturity Trends from small mill CCS curve trend analysis based on 10-14 months crop age
3. Herbicide tolerance – commercial observations
4. Field characteristics such as lodging, trashing, suckering, flowering, and ratooning ability.

The information is designed to assist Tully growers adopt these varieties as quickly and efficiently as possible and also strengthen the relationship between the local industry and SRA.

## How the TVMG fits into the industry:

SRA variety development

Tully Variety  
Management Group

TCPSL Approved Seed

A critical factor integral to the success of the group is the use of the TSL laboratory for small mill sampling to sample blanket-approved varieties.

These blanket approved varieties have been tested through the SRA Final Assessment Trials and released to the industry by the Variety Approval Committee, usually with limited local trial data.

These trials provide local information that lead to better recommendations and facilitate commercial adoption.

TSL is currently trialing the SRA Cane Maturity Calculator for suggestions on refining a version suitable for the small mill sampling done for regional trials. They hope this will improve efficiency and reduce costs.

The group has high expectations for new varieties SRA6 and SRA7 and their suitability in the region. These varieties have been released with complementary variety information from SRA trials in the northern region.

These varieties are to be included in the TVMG trials to fine tune the recommendations reported.

The TVMG began with five growers, TSL, TCPSL and SRA and two trial sites in 2012. The group now has 32 growers, seven trial sites, and fortnightly updates of variety performance both from small mill and commercial analysis.

Tully-based SRA Adoption Support Officer Gavin Rodman joined the group in 2016. TSL's Cane Productivity Manager Greg Shannon leads the group with TSL technician Jimmy Chen and Gavin Rodman making up the local team who conduct the weekly sampling and observations.

They are supported with strategic and technical information by Roderick Fletcher (SRA Adoption Officer – Varieties).

In 2016 a new local variety guide was produced as a companion to the SRA variety guide to assist growers and advisors with variety recommendations.

Tully Canegrowers Director and original group member David Singh believes this group is a significant step forward for the industry. "Having a group like this developing local recommendations for new varieties gives growers extra confidence," Mr Singh said.

"While SRA do a good job breeding the canes and providing sound recommendations on a district scale, we still need local knowledge before we go full steam ahead and plant a new variety, especially now with so many to choose from.

"This group allows us to fine-tune recommendations under local conditions so that by the time we are ready to plant large amounts, we have access to this local data and observations."

TSL provides an on farm variety recommendation service, as do TCPSL who release the new SRA-bred varieties. In addition, information is also provided via QCANESelect™ via [www.sugarresearch.com.au](http://www.sugarresearch.com.au).