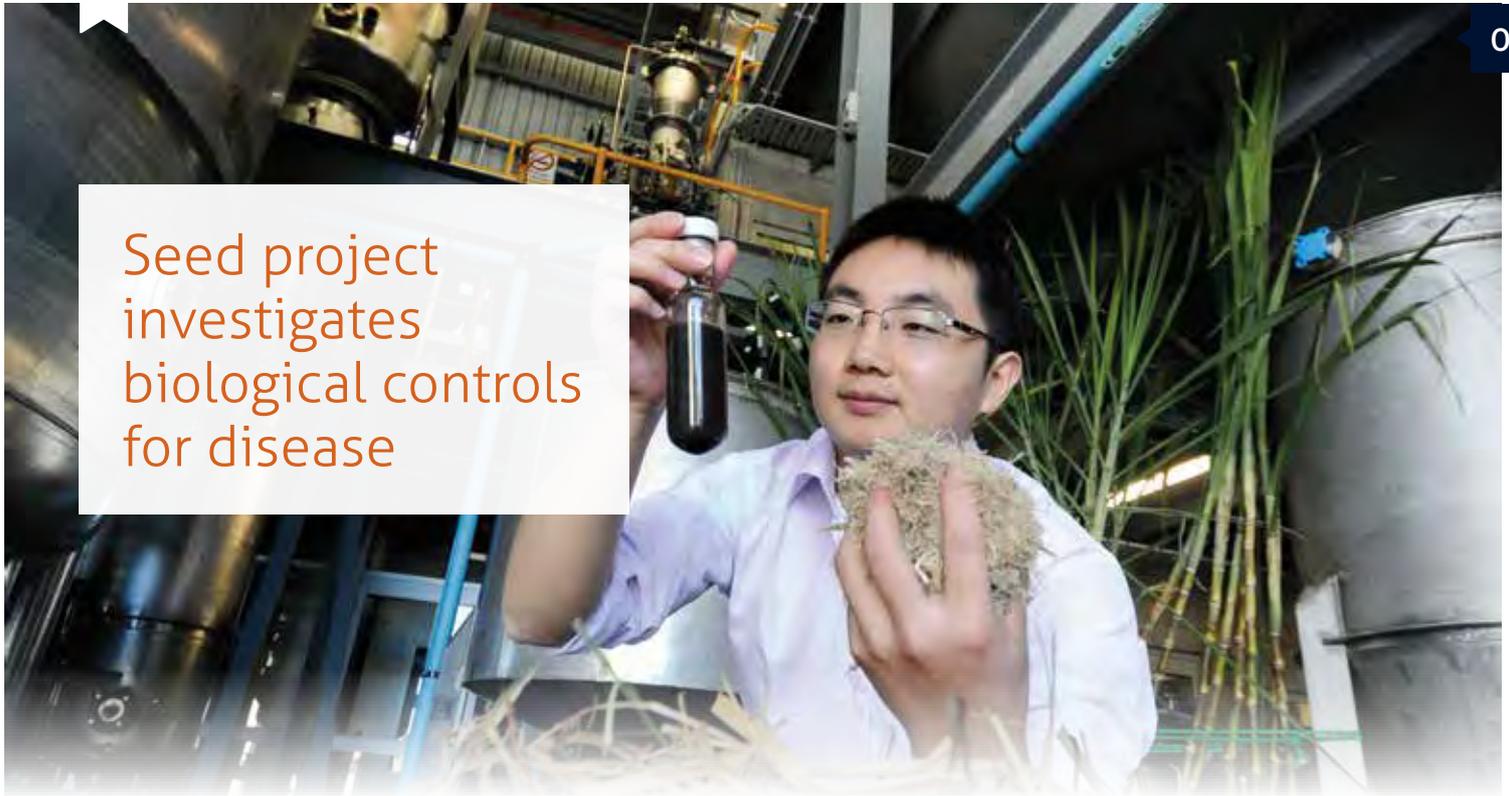


## Seed project investigates biological controls for disease



*A new small-scale research project is investigating the use of biological controls in sugarcane that could help encourage growth and reduce the impact from some diseases.*

The project is part of Sugar Research Australia's investment in career development opportunities through its Early-Career and Mid-Career Researcher Awards.

These awards are aimed at assisting researchers within the industry to develop innovative and transformative projects that benefit sugarcane growers and millers.

As part of that program, QUT Researcher Dr Jan Zhanying Zhang is working on a project called *Enhancing sugarcane growth and yield by biocontrol agents / biofertilisers*.

Research has been conducted into biocontrol agents, including organisms called Trichoderma, in some overseas cane-growing countries, but limited work has been done in Australia.

Dr Zhang said it is thought that biocontrol agents have the potential to inhibit diseases within sugarcane such as pineapple disease and red rot.

"The results will depend on the interaction between the biocontrol agent and the targeted sugarcane pathogen," he said. "It is hoped that the biocontrol agent can inhibit the incidence of disease."

The project will also be preliminarily assessing whether the biocontrol agents could be produced in a commercially useful way. This will investigate whether the agents could be grown on low cost substrates for example by using bagasse or mill mud.

The use of biocontrol agents is also promising because it would present an environmentally-friendly control option when compared to traditional chemical pesticides.

The project began on July 1 2016 and is scheduled to run to May 2017.

The ECR / MCR Awards are available for diverse activities, including for researchers who may require initial results or a proof of concept prior to developing a larger project, and who want to expand their skills and build collaborations in pursuit of an innovative initiative.

### Key Focus Area

Capability development, attraction and retention

### Project name

Enhancing sugarcane growth and yield by biocontrol agents / biofertilisers

### Project number

2014/402

### Project leader

Jan Zhanying Zhang

### Project end date

May 2017

For information on the 2017 funding round for the ECR / MCR Awards, please visit the SRA website, [www.sugarresearch.com.au](http://www.sugarresearch.com.au).

**Above:** Dr Jan Zhanying Zhang.