

Rocky Point grower and SRA  
Delegate, Greg Zipf.

## Solid yields and sugar for Rocky Point growers

*Two good crops in 2015 and 2016 are showing the performance of sugarcane varieties for Rocky Point cane growers, although the region has had challenges in harvesting the crop.*

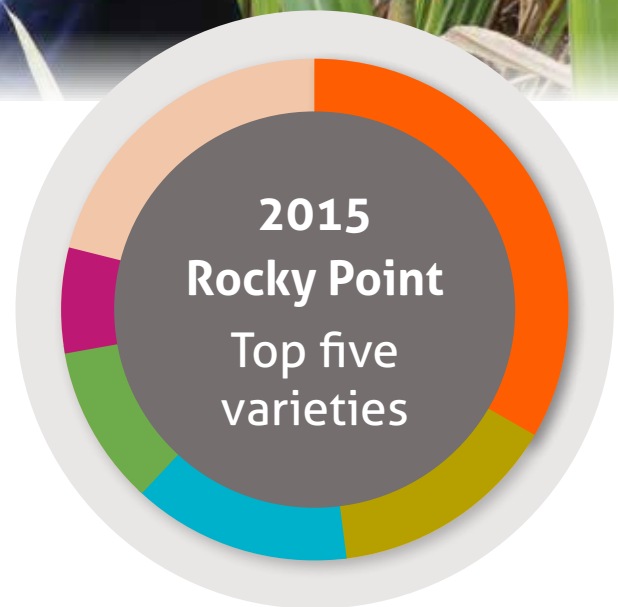
In 2015, Rocky Point cane growers harvested their largest crop in over a decade both in total tonnes and tonnes of cane per hectare (TCH).

In the boxed-in region between the urban sprawl of Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the region harvested 384,000 tonne of cane last year at an average of 102 TCH.

This included about 25 percent of the area being two-year old standover. Nevertheless, the plant cane average was still slightly above 100 TCH and ratoon crops averaged 98TCH.

According to local grower, Greg Zipf, there have been a number of standout varieties that had made a positive contribution to the region.

"One of the main varieties here over a number of years now has been Q232<sup>®</sup>, which last year produced 114 TCH and 15.3 tonnes of sugar per hectare (TSH)," Greg said. "KQ228<sup>®</sup> is still popular, with 106TCH and 14.7 TSH.



Variety	%
Q232 <sup>®</sup>	34%
Q208 <sup>®</sup>	14%
KQ228 <sup>®</sup>	13%
Q240 <sup>®</sup>	11%
Q138	7%
Other varieties	21%

He said there was small amounts of SRA1<sup>®</sup> and SRA2<sup>®</sup> being planted, and while they looked good, very little commercial cane had been harvested to provide a growers' assessment on these varieties.

"There are a couple of other varieties where the jury is still out, such as Q252<sup>®</sup>. Q248<sup>®</sup> is one that we are not happy with at this stage, and Q245<sup>®</sup> is one that it is still a bit early to say whether it will be a goer here or not."

Greg said the crop in the ground this year got off to a shaky start with dry December and January weather, but a change in the season meant that it looks as good as or better than last year, on those blocks cut prior the end of October 15.

However, with a late start to crushing, there are several unknowns for the local industry.

Considering these challenges, Greg said that the region now considered that harvesting 50 percent of the crop would be a good outcome.

Sunshine Sugar has assisted with crushing last year's standover cane through the Condong Mill in NSW.

Depending on the season length at Condong, Mr Zipf said there had been discussions occurring about sending Rocky Point cane to Condong once it finished crushing its own cane.

Because of all those factors, Greg said this year was a "survival year".

"Getting half of the crop off now will be a best case scenario now, unfortunately," Greg said.

"The long range forecast is suggesting that we will get average to above average rainfall in the southeast corner, so it also really depends on whether that rain falls on top of us or not."

With the harvest started, Greg said strategic harvesting of blocks would be crucial.

"At Rocky Point there is no problem with standing crops over, and we historically nearly double our tonnes. We know that there will be issues with heavier crops and varieties like Q242<sup>®</sup> where there is risk that there will be dead sticks and impacts on CCS next year.

"So our focus will be on the heavier crops and varieties like Q232<sup>®</sup> where we have started to see flowering early.

"The good news is that people are still planting and most are continuing to do that. Despite the challenges we know it is crucial to get those plants in the ground for future years."

Rocky Point cane awaiting harvest in 2016.

