



Bruce Davies with son Josh, who is currently studying at the Gatton agricultural college (University of Queensland).

Positive performance sets 2016 as a year to remember

The 2016 season is shaping up as positive for sugarcane grower Bruce Davies.

Bruce Davies started his farming career in 1993, and in those 23 years of farming he can't recall many years like 2016 when good yields have lined up with favourable world sugar prices.

Bruce met with **CaneConnection** in October as the crush was about two thirds complete in the Burdekin.

As is a common challenge across the industry in 2016, the progress of the harvest was behind where he would like it to be – but he is happy with the tonnes coming off the paddocks.

"When we started growing this crop we were facing severe water restrictions from the Burdekin dam, so we were very nervous and we were moderating our water use to be conservative," he said.

"So to go from that to a good crop is excellent."

"Our CCS may be slightly down. We normally average about 15.5, but this year I think it will be closer to 15. For tonnes, we are looking in the range of an average of 130-135 tonnes of cane per hectare, which is good for us and really what we need to justify the cost that comes with the water use."

He grows a large amount of Q183[®] and also sees Q208[®] as a strong performer, particularly when he is able to plant it early. He also likes how Q240[®] is performing and thinks it will be a "winner".

He chooses varieties based on recommendations from Burdekin Productivity Services (BPS) according to factors such as soil type.

He spends time and investment getting things right at the start of the crop cycle. This includes laser levelling when required.

Tillage is minimised, but the ground is worked if there has been a wet harvest (as trucks are used to haul out) and gypsum is used to ameliorate sodic areas.

Farm investment follows a conservative pattern where Bruce hopes that he can ride out the highs and lows of seasons and prices. Part of that plan saw the purchase of a new wide row track-tractor this year, which is able to move a larger implement and resulting in efficiencies in labour and fuel, as well as doing a better job.

"We have a conservative program of spending and basically keep to that, knowing that we need to be prepared for a rainy day," he said.

"For example, this year we're having a good crop, but we also know that with the season running late we are likely to have a smaller crop in 2017."