

Variety decisions rest with the local industry through new RVCs



With changes to biosecurity legislation in both Queensland and New South Wales the previous process for the approval and release of sugarcane varieties from Sugar Research Australia (SRA) has changed.

The changes have required several processes to be established and over recent weeks SRA has supported the establishment of these processes under the new system.

As part of the legislative changes the previous power held by the Queensland and NSW departments for the establishment of approved variety lists has been removed.

SRA will develop and release sugarcane varieties that are developed through the SRA breeding program and, based on the recommendations from the Regional Variety Committees, recommended variety lists will be produced. The Regional Variety Committees (RVCs) will replace the previous Variety Approval Committees.

These regional committees are responsible for the decisions around variety release. For that reason, SRA does not chair these meetings, as the decision on variety approval is a decision for the committee (growers, millers, and other stakeholders).

Some of these committees have already met over recent weeks, with the process of the nomination of voting members identified at a regional level.

RVC membership should include representatives from growers, mills and productivity service organisations and include the identification of a chair and secretary within the committee. SRA's role within the RVC will be limited to the provision of relevant technical information to assist the committee in making decisions on particular varieties.

SRA will continue to provide logistic support to the RVCs, through regional variety officers and plant breeders, to ensure an effective transition into the new system.

The Sugarcane Industry Biosecurity Committee (SIBC) will act as the industry committee for biosecurity matters. Its membership consists of industry, research organisations and State government.

In addition to decisions on varieties, the RVCs are also reviewing the current disease thresholds for their region and advise SIBC of the recommendations.

SIBC will consider biosecurity matters impacting the SRA plant breeding program and provide advice to Biosecurity Queensland and the NSW Department of Primary Industries with regard to biosecurity factors such as disease resistance that can determine/limit movement of sugarcane plant material between biosecurity zones.

For more information on Biosecurity contact SRA KFA Leader for Biosecurity, Dr Andrew Ward on award@sugarresearch.com.au or (07) 3331 3319; or for varieties and plant breeding, KFA Leader for Optimally Adapted Varieties, Plant Breeding and Release, Dr Bert Collard, bcollard@sugarresearch.com.au or (07) 4056 4507.

Above: Regional Variety Committees are replacing the former Variety Approval Committees, to determine new sugarcane varieties.