In this eNewsletter we look at a series of new information sheets developed on automation of furrow irrigation, we update you on the SRA grower survey underway, and we update you on coming events.

SRA grower survey 2018

Over the next few weeks, SRA is undertaking a phone survey of grower members. The purpose of the phone survey is to learn more about key farm issues in relation to SRA's investment in research, development, and adoption. The survey also asks a number of questions about SRA's performance. SRA Members are selected at random for the survey, and individual responses are not provided to SRA (answers are only provided in aggregated form). The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete, and SRA thanks those who participate. If you have questions, please contact SRA Executive Manager, Communications, Brad Pfeffer on (07) 3331 3340.

Automation of irrigation

The National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA) received funding from SRA to investigate the automation of furrow irrigation in the sugar industry. The first phase involved a review of potential commercially available control hardware, sensors and radio systems and the installation of this equipment on three farms. These farms were chosen because they represented three different, but common, types of irrigation infrastructure in the Burdekin. As part of the project, the team has developed new information sheets on the three grower participants in the project. Read the information sheets and learn more about the potential of automation here.

Queensland farmers growing knowledge in the field

At the end of March, 115 growers and industry professionals from the Bundaberg/Isis/Maryborough region participated in a field trip organised by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF). The field trip provided growers with current information on regionally focussed research and innovation.

DAF's Principal Agronomist and Coastal Farming Systems Team Leader Neil Halpin spoke about the benefits of planting legume rotation crops in sugarcane farming systems to obtain nitrogen for free. Growers were also given the opportunity to learn about:

- Applying nitrogen fertiliser more efficiently, to reduce impacts on reef water quality;
- New legume varieties; and
- Reduced till options to improve farming systems.

At the end of the day participants were asked to complete a survey.

For the Department and partner organisations, the results of the day were also very positive with 93% of those attending the field day reporting increased knowledge about these technologies and trials.

“One of the main outcomes of the day was to provide information about best management practice so that growers would be in the best position to implement practice change.
“DAF was pleased to find that growers reported that there were over 25 changes that they would consider implementing in their businesses as a result of attending the field day,” said Mr Halpin.
The event was a great success and thanks are also due to Grains Research Development Corporation, Sugar Research Australia, Peanut Company of Australia and Reef Trust III for their support of the day.

USQ and John Deere partnership developing next generation of agricultural technology

University of Southern Queensland (USQ) agtech research is helping shape the landscape of farming not just in Australia, but worldwide.
USQ researchers are exploring new intelligence-based technologies and solutions for the agricultural industry to deliver real value to farmers and change the way primary producers look at land management and production.
Thanks to an ongoing partnership with John Deere, USQ research is lifting farm productivity, developing the next generation of agricultural technology – including machine automation and control such as driverless tractors.
This global partnership with John Deere, along with investments from both USQ and various funding bodies, is helping provide a gateway for the commercialisation of other technologies to take worldwide related to machine perception and intelligence for applications such as automated weed management systems.
USQ’s Professor Craig Baillie said this global commercialisation strategy was a shining example of researchers working collaboratively with industry to understand problems facing the sector, to determine what new technologies would benefit farmers in the future.
“This research partnership will not only benefit Australian communities but also international industries, which illustrates the global reach and relevance of USQ’s research efforts in agricultural engineering,” Professor Baillie said.
“It also highlights the importance that international organisations are giving to the development of future technologies that will transform agricultural industries over the years to come.
“High tech farming is becoming an everyday tool for primacy producers, therefore, our researchers are consistently looking to improve the profitability, environmental sustainability and socio-economic wellbeing of our rural industries.”
Work for the technology was originally funded through a combination of industry research projects between Sugar Research Australia, Cotton Research Development Corporation, Horticulture Innovation and USQ, and has spanned the last 10 years.

Events

2018 harvesting forums

SRA harvesting forums are on again in 2018 in the lead-up to the harvest, with NSW regions still remaining. Visit the events page for more information.

Grower research update – Burdekin

An SRA / BPS grower research update is on in Ayr on 22 May (including harvesting information). See the events page for more information.

SRA / MAPS field day

Join SRA and Mackay Area Productivity Services for the joint field day next week. See here for more information.