



In this eNewsletter we visit Maryborough and Childers as part of a Herbert harvesting tour, we update you on the latest research in digital agriculture, and we provide an update on coming events.

Herbert millers and growers visit Isis / Maryborough

Herbert growers and millers travelled to Isis and Maryborough recently thanks to Wilmar, SRA, and HCP SL. The trip was a chance to discuss harvesting best outcomes work that has occurred in the region and also minimising harvest loss on a commercial scale.

The group met with growers and millers in the region, including a group of Isis harvesting contractors called the Clean Team. These contractors have made significant adjustments to their harvesting practices to reduce cane losses and minimise the amount of trash, stool and dirt that makes it into cane bins. There was a strong interest in the chopper system used on these harvesters, as there is evidence to suggest this system reduces sugar losses. The Herbert group also had an opportunity to talk with the Clean Team about how reduced ground speeds and controlled pour rates have impacted the financials of harvesting businesses.

Securing the future through digital agriculture

Producers across the agriculture sector will benefit from a whole-of-industry approach to make digital technology data more applicable and usable for decisions that drive profit.

As part of the Precision Agriculture to Decision Agriculture (P2D) project, the CSIRO Data 61 team has been conducting a review of platforms, tools and data types to identify the opportunities that are likely to deliver the biggest returns across the industry.

After speaking to researchers, producers and technology service providers, they're focusing on five data areas to unleash the full benefits of digital agriculture – climate, weather, soil quality, imagery and property boundaries.

“We've learnt from America that better use of soil data has the potential to significantly increase profits,” said Research Director Simon Barry.

“Here in Australia, we've seen a growth in remote sensor techniques and improved knowledge at the regional level, but the key challenge is to understand the soil variations at a local level and include that information into the mix, to provide a more accurate picture for making important decisions.

“To make that happen we need outcomes like better sensors, cheaper processing and smarter ways of operating at the farm level and I don't think we can achieve that without a whole-of-industry approach,” said Dr Barry.

The Data 61 team will make recommendations for introducing measures to improve the use of soil data, as well as ways to:

- Combine data from on-farm weather stations to provide greater analysis.

- Break down impressionistic seasonal forecast information so it's more applicable on individual farms.
- Develop ways to manage and produce property boundary data to meet specific market requirements.
- Find ways to pre-process new imagery data so that producers have access to information that's relevant to them.

"There are a lot of new opportunities emerging with radar and satellite imagery which will allow crop scouting and crop performance analytics.

"But to fast-track access, we'll need to reduce the cost for the producer of pre-processing that imagery data into something more meaningful," said Dr Barry.

The team will also develop recommendations to improve the value of all aggregated data, so that the information available to producers is relevant to their farm and business operation.

"We can't afford for our data holdings to become dumping grounds for useless information, otherwise we dilute the benefit of using aggregated data to make decisions about inputs and farm practices," said Dr Barry.

"This is about making sure Australia stays ahead of the game when it comes to digital technology and maintains its competitive edge in a global marketplace," he said.

The P2D project is due to deliver its findings, as well as practical tools and outputs for farmers, at the end of the year. The industry partnership is led by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural R&D For Profit Program and all 15 Rural Research and Development Corporations. It also involves research support from three universities, CSIRO Data 61, the Australian Farm Institute and the Data to Decisions CRC.

You can learn more about the project by visiting the [website](#).

Ashes ticket winners

Congratulations to John and Beth Richards from Mackay, who won the Ashes tickets as part of the recent 'Energy in irrigated cane' survey. This survey was conducted by Agecon as part of an SRA-funded project.

Events

Introductory Sugar Advisors' Workshop – Townsville

The Introductory Sugar Advisors Workshop provides participants with a solid foundation in the sugarcane industry. From the sugarcane value chain to key aspects of growing cane, this workshop has become an important part of the education process for new entrants into the industry. It is on from 6-8 February, 2018, in Townsville. See [our website](#) for details.

Soil health masterclasses

Multiple soil health masterclasses are being held in the Burdekin, Southern Region, and Far North Queensland in 2018. These masterclasses will help you take your understanding of soil health to the next level with a specific focus on soil biology. See the [events page](#) of the SRA website for more information.

SIX EASY STEPS workshops – Central

SIX EASY STEPS nutrient management workshops will be on in the Central region in February 2018, with workshops in Plane Creek (13 February), Mackay (14 February) and Proserpine (15 February). Contact your local productivity services organisation to register or for more information.