



In this eNewsletter we have a look at some of the early results from Harvest Optimisation Week in the Herbert, we have opened submissions for new research projects to begin in 2018, and we update you on the SRA Board's visit to Tully and Ingham.

Herbert: Harvest Optimisation Week

Improvements in the quality of cane delivered to Macknade Mill may have helped boost the mill's crushing rate, according to preliminary results from last week's Harvest Optimisation Week (HOW) trial (Sunday 20 August to Saturday 26 August).

Herbert Cane Productivity Services Limited Manager Mr Lawrence Di Bella the early trial results revealed there was a significant increase in sound cane billets supplied to the mill during the first three days of HOW.

There was also a measurable reduction in the amount of damaged billets, cane roots, stools and trash supplied to the mill. The HOW trial was designed to collect hard data on whether changes to harvesting practices could maximise revenue for the Herbert sugar industry.

Throughout last week, about 20 harvesters supplying Macknade Mill were required to operate at the machine's optimal set-up to reduce cane loss in the paddock.

Mr Di Bella said the combination of higher cane quality, lower billet losses and less extraneous matter had a positive effect on the mill's crushing rate.

"We saw an increase in the crushing rate of approximately 18 tonnes per hour for Macknade Mill over the first three days of the trial," Mr Di Bella said.

"If this rate could be maintained throughout a whole crushing season, it would mean that Herbert River Mills would have crushed out six days earlier last year.

"This six-day reduction in season length would mean that the Herbert industry would not have crushed through Christmas in 2016, would not have harvested cane in the wet at the end of the season, and would not have left standover behind."

Three SRA and HCPSL teams worked with harvesting contractors during the trial to measure sugar losses, cane losses and billet quality from harvesters.

Wilmar Sugar teams collected data on CCS, cane fibre, crushing rates, bin weight, sugar quality and cane quality.

Harvesting teams collected data on the time taken to fill bins, time spent waiting for bins and fuel use for harvesters and haulouts.

Phil Patane (SRA Adoption Officer – Harvesting) said while some feedback would be provided to the local sugar industry in the short term, it would take several weeks to analyse the data fully.

"HCPSL and SRA staff will undertake an in-depth analysis of the trial and the results will be presented to the whole industry after the dust settles on the 2017 harvest," Mr Patane said.

“SRA and HCPSL sincerely thank everyone involved in HOW. The data collected during HOW will allow the industry to realise the full commercial worth of the cane crop across the whole value chain.”

This trial is supported and funded by SRA, HCPSL, Wilmar Sugar, and the Sugar Research Institute, with support from CANEGROWERS Herbert River, and the Australian Cane Farmers Association.

New research ideas sought to benefit Australian sugarcane industry

SRA is seeking new and innovative research ideas that will help improve the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of Australian sugarcane growers and millers.

SRA CEO Mr Neil Fisher said that SRA was seeking innovative research concepts that align with SRA’s newly developed five-year Strategic Plan.

If you have an innovating research concept with the potential to deliver identified Outcomes to a practical problem that has been identified by the industry, SRA would like to hear from you.

SRA is inviting applications for potential new research projects that would begin from July 1, 2018.

“Our Strategic Plan has been created in consultation with our investors and is focused on delivering profitability, productivity, and sustainability outcomes for the Australian sugarcane industry,” Mr Fisher said.

“Our Strategic Plan is underpinned by the four overarching goals of driving profitability, improving sustainability, enhancing capability, and strengthening organisational excellence.

“We encourage researchers to submit their best and brightest ideas. We also strongly encourage ideas that have been developed in consultation with industry.”

SRA will preferentially invest in prioritised research investment opportunities identified across each KFA (Key Focus Area).

More information on the 2018 Project Call and the Strategic Plan is available from

www.sugarresearch.com.au.

Information on how to apply is also available from the website, or you can call the SRA Research Funding Unit on (07) 3331 3333 or funding@sugarresearch.com.au.

Applications opened on August 28, 2017, and they will close on October 9, 2017.

SRA will run a two-stage selection process that begins with the submission of preliminary research proposals (PRPs), and then successful PRP applicants will be invited to submit a final research proposal (FRP).

SRA Board visit – Tully and Ingham

The SRA Board met with growers, millers and industry stakeholders during visits to Tully (August 16) and Ingham (August 17). The SRA Board regularly meet with investors across the industry to discuss their priorities for research, development and adoption (RD&A) from SRA. The Board hold six meetings per year, three of which are in regional cane-growing areas.

Meetings in Tully included a visit to TSL and a tour of the mill, field talks with Tully Cane Productivity Services Limited, and a visit to the SRA Tully research station. Talks there included SRA’s work on nutrient management and managing Pachymetra root rot. The Board also met with Tully CANEGROWERS and visited growers in the region to hear about their priorities. It was the SRA Board’s first formal visit to Tully since the formation of SRA in 2013.

The Board met with investors and stakeholders in Ingham and also saw research activity in the region including plant breeding (new varieties), engineering (harvest efficiency), nutrient management, water logging, and farm business management.

SRA thanks everyone for their support for the visit.

Energy solutions for irrigated cane

The rising cost of electricity and its impact on sugarcane growers is well documented. In an effort to alleviate cost pressures, SRA has recently funded a project based on improving energy efficiency in irrigated cane. The project's feasibility studies of applying innovative, renewable energy and storage technology requires new data to ensure the researchers target areas with the greatest needs.

The research, led by AgEcon, have asked growers to complete a short five-minute survey

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/cane_energy_solutions

Upon completion, you will go into the draw for 2 premium seating tickets to the 1st Ashes test at the Gabba on 25 November, 2017.

Please note individual survey results will remain confidential.

If you have any questions please contact Jon Welsh at AgEcon on 0458 215 335 or Andres Jaramillo (SRA) on 0475 973 282.

Events

TropAg2017

TropAg2017 is the world's leading tropical agriculture event bringing together the best in research and innovation, across plant, animal and food sciences. It will be held in Brisbane from 20 - 22 November 2017. The sugarcane symposium will focus on the theme of constraints on production. Find out [more](#).

Registrations open: APEN conference

Extension providers around the country are invited to register for the upcoming Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) conference in September in North Queensland. The conference is bringing together extension providers from Australia and around the world to share their experiences and innovations in delivering extension to farmers, to help them improve productivity and profitability. The 2017 International Conference of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network will be held from 12 to 15 September 2017 in Townsville. Find out [more](#).

Australian Women in Agriculture Conference 2017

The AWiA conference will be held in Brisbane from 22nd to 24th September. *Securing Australian Agriculture - Sustaining families, farming and our future* will focus on the diversity of skills and contributions made by women in agriculture. Find out [more](#).

SRA Variety Selection Day - Mackay

Ever wanted to get involved in variety selection? Then do not miss the opportunity to get involved in the Central region's Progeny Assessment Trials (PAT) selection stage being held in Mackay on 26 September. Find out [more](#).