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In this eNewsletter we have a look at the brand new Climate Kelpie website, we head to Mackay for the variety selection day, and we outline a career development program for up-and-coming engineers.

New climate website for farmers

A new look Climate Kelpie website, responsible for rounding up climate information for Australian farmers for over a decade, was launched last week. Climate Kelpie is a website for farmers, rural advisors and natural resource managers seeking credible climate risk management tools and information to increase the understanding and uptake of climate-related tools and information that benefit agriculture. It features blog posts, new decision support tools and current seasonal climate information. The MCV program is supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, Grains Research and Development Corporation, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Sugar Research Australia and AgriFutures Australia.

Variety selection day: Mackay

The 2018 Variety Selection Day was held 1 August at SRA's Te Kowai research station and offered growers and productivity service staff the opportunity to get involved in Progeny Assessment Trial (PAT) selections. The event saw participants heading out into the field to decide on the clones to continue through the SRA breeding program.

The day started with Farm Manager Annette Corcoron speaking about the significance of effective block review for the management of varieties. Dr George Piperidis then provided an in-depth overview of the Central region breeding program and the PAT selection process. The rest of the morning was spent in the field overseeing the process of PAT selection with the participants and, together with SRA staff, they assisted with the enjoyable but challenging task.

Selection at the PAT stage takes into account the performance of the family based on tonnes and CCS, replicated over a trial. From this data the number of clones to take from each plot is determined and the challenge of selecting which clones to go forward was offered to participants.

The event generated good discussions among participants and presenters. This is an annual event so if you are passionate about varieties and want to learn more about the breeding program keep a lookout in 2019.

Work placement gives a sweet taste of research for engineering student

Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering student Ms Rhianna Cardamone has received an up-close look at the inner mechanics of the Australian sugarcane industry – and she likes what she has seen.

Ms Cardamone is among this year's cohort of undergraduate and graduate students participating in scholarship and bursary programs supported by the Sugar Research Institute (SRI) and Sugar Research Australia (SRA).

As part of the ASIS (Australian Sugar Industry Scholarship), Ms Cardamone has recently completed a four-week placement at the SRA Ingham research station, working with SRA Agricultural Engineer Mr Joseph Bonassi.

"This has been the first of three four-week placements for me, and it has been a great introduction to the sugar industry through SRA," she said. "Coming from Brisbane, I had never been to Ingham before and didn't have an appreciation that the sugar industry is such a huge employer and such an important industry for Australia.

"As an engineering student, it is also great to get a taste of the diverse possible careers on offer in the sugar industry, and also to see engineering work done by Joseph here at Ingham."

This work includes the recently rebuilt chopper test rig, which is a stationary machine that replicates the feedtrain of a sugarcane harvester. This impressive tool is used for both research and adoption to assist SRA's research program for reducing sugar and cane loss.

Mr Bonassi is himself a former recipient of an ASIS and said: "Hosting Rhianna was a great opportunity to showcase the industry and build potential future capability."

The scholarship is awarded to university students in their penultimate year studying chemical, mechanical, process or electrical engineering or science degrees with an interest in working in the Australian sugar industry.

SRI Learning and Development Manager, Mr Bruce King, said: "Scholarships and bursaries are awarded to a variety of undergraduate and graduate engineers with the aim of investing in young people and building capacity in the industry."

"Since the program's inception in 2015, graduate recipients are now working in the Australian sugar industry. Past recipients gained valuable learning experience of process systems and machinery, insights into the maintenance requirements of a sugar factory, people skills and opportunities to apply theory on real projects that improve process efficiency, sugar quality and plant design," Mr King said.

Events

Webinar – energy solutions in sugarcane

In this upcoming webinar, SRA-funded research economists Janine Powell and Jon Welsh (AgEcon) provide an insight into their recently completed case study analyses in three separate grid-connected irrigation settings: 55kW bore and big guns, 75, 45 and 55kW centre pivot pumps and 18 and 15kW shallow well pumps servicing flood irrigation. The short webinar will cover policy settings, technology options and feasibility results. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. Register [here](#).

Precision Ag workshop

A Society of Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA) precision ag workshop is being held at the SRA Ingham research station, on September 7. The workshop is a chance to hear practical experiences from farmers and researchers and to see the latest in precision agriculture technology.