



DISTRICT REPORTS...

TABLELANDS

With 6878 hectares for harvest in 2009, a crop of 650,000 tonnes is expected. Although crop yield (tonnes per hectare) is expected to be similar to last year, the area for harvest is down six per cent. With this in mind, the start date for the 2009 season will be no earlier than Monday, May 25.

Q200** is the most popular variety largely due to smut resistance and excellent all season sugar content. Q200** will make up 42 per cent of the 2009 crop and has largely displaced Q120 and Q174** (Table 1). The area planted to smut resistant and intermediate varieties is approaching 75 per cent and places the Tableland industry in an excellent position to deal with the emerging smut outbreak.

TABLE 1: Per cent of harvest area - Tableland Mill

Variety	Crop Year				
	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09 (est)
Q200**	4	12	28	37	42
Q174**	25	25	19	13	9
Q120	16	13	9	5	3

Data supplied by BBS Ltd

The eighth confirmed case of sugarcane smut was identified in a sprayout block of Q174** in early April at Biboohra. This is the first confirmed case of smut in the Biboohra locality (north of Mareeba township). Smut has now been confirmed south of Walkamin, north and east of Mareeba and as far west as the Walsh River. As all but one of the confirmed cases of smut involved Q174**, growers are urged to ploughout this variety as soon as possible to reduce the infection pressure on other varieties.

Season to date rainfall (July to March) of 1070mm (Mareeba AP) is 30 per cent above the long term average. With 97 per cent of this rain falling during November to March, little irrigation was needed during the summer months. With only 18 mm of rain since mid-March, growers have started

irrigating again to carry their crops through to harvest. With inflow in to Tinaroo Dam continuing, capacity remains at 100 percent ensuring water allocations for the current year and 2010 crop.

**Drewe Burgess, BSES
Tablelands April 15, 2009**

INNISFAIL/ TULLY

April has been kind to farmers in the wet tropics. Monsoonal activity has occurred and rainfall restricted its appearance to the Easter Weekend.

Paddocks are now drying out and fallow blocks are in the early stages of preparation for pre-season plantings.

Smut is spreading rapidly in Q166 and Q174 and farmers should not plant susceptible varieties - plant the resistant varieties instead. By removing highly susceptible varieties the disease load is reduced on better performing canes thus reducing the serious losses which could occur in the ratoon cycle.

Cane grubs are active and the Silkwood area appears to be the hotspot with significant grub damage evident. Farmers should contact their BSES officers or chemical supplier on cane grub control measures.

Bundaberg Sugar has announced tentative starting dates for its Northern Mills. Tablelands Mill is expected to start on May 25 and the coastal mills at Babinda and Innisfail should start on June 16. This is subject to final estimates from farmers and weather conditions.

**John Blankensee
ACFA Innisfail Director
April 30, 2009**

HERBERT

As I write we have, at long last, some dry weather! It's a welcome relief after months of rain.



We didn't escape the rain over the Easter period - scattered rainfall fell over the Herbert with some areas being inundated with 325 ml (17 inches) of rain.

Farmers absent during that period were in complete shock at the amount of rain that fell upon their return.

Because of Cyclone Ellie and the severe flooding, 20 per cent of the cane crop may be lost in the district this year. Government help is restricted to funds from Centrelink, the other option is to borrow money.

As 50 per cent of farmers across Australia can no longer afford to go and borrow more money it is about time farmers and their families were listened to by both State and Federal Governments who should be taking action instead of talking rhetoric.

Hinchinbrook Council, along with all affected stakeholders in the Herbert, put together a draft on all related flood issues resulting from Cyclone Ellie. This has now been completed and the council has presented this report to the State Government.

The council and their staff have worked tirelessly to get reports ready for every meeting and all stakeholders have contrib-

...28▷

<27...DISTRICT REPORTS

uted to the final draft. They are now waiting for a reply.

Considerable damage has resulted from this Cyclone with major damage along the Herbert River. Where the river broke its banks, roads and paddocks were scoured. The railway lines were also damaged with the water even shifting heavy cement sleepers.

Photographs have been taken of a lot of the river bank damage where huge trees were washed away and in some places, hundreds of metres of scrub trees disappeared.

The clean up effort will be a mammoth one.

Farmers these days seem to be continually blasted by the media and government departments over water quality – we are blamed for chemical residues and soil going out to the reef.

No farmer indiscriminately uses chemicals and no farmer deliberately sprays with chemicals if there is any sign of rain. With the exorbitant costs of these chemicals they are used sparingly.

As far as putting soil out on the reef, most of the soil erosion in the Herbert came from the river itself.

Farmers have been taking pictorial evidence of the damage.

As for water quality in normal circumstances – there has been ongoing water quality testing over a period of years and it was found that there was more pollution above the farms in the valley coming through the National Parks than from farming.

Consequently, the equipment used to test water quality is now hanging from bridges and rocks either abandoned or sold off.

Some of it can be seen today.

Carol Mackee
ACFA Herbert Director
April 30, 2009

BURDEKIN

The rain over the Easter weekend has caused further delays to planting operations in the Burdekin, adding to the effects of prolonged wet weather from January onwards. While some areas have recommenced preparations and planting, other areas will be delayed for another week or more.

Concerns have been raised about cane

already planted and whether it will germinate and establish, especially blocks that were watered immediately prior to the last rain.

Some cane that as been planted deeper has shown patchy emergence and BSES Extension Officer, Marian Davis has reminded growers that BSES recommends a maximum of 75 mm of cover when using double disc openers and less in a conventional system. With the onset of cooler weather, depth of cover will become an even more important issue.

Farmers are also reminded that KQ228** is sensitive to ametryn and asulam products and that severe discolouration and burning can be expected if these are applied over the top of cane. To minimise the risk of crop damage we are advised that these products should always be applied as a directed spray.

New instances of sugarcane smut continue to be found, principally in Q117. Farmers are urged to keep an eye out for signs of sugarcane smut and to report anything unusual to either BPS or BSES.

With BSES scientists confirming that all smut susceptible varieties remaining in the Burdekin will be affected by productivity-inhibiting smut within two years, it is important that all growers move to a good mix of the resistant and intermediate varieties as soon as possible.

CSR forward pricing information sessions will be held in the Burdekin in May to provide growers with information about cane payment advances and pricing opportunities for upcoming seasons.

CSR Sugar has given growers more control over their forward pricing elections through the establishment of an online pricing web page, accessible with a personal log-in via CSR's GrowerWeb.

For further information, growers should contact CSR Sugar Grower Pricing Officer Tami McCarthy on 3364 1685 or 0407 005 928.

Margaret Menzel
ACFA Burdekin Director
April 24, 2009

CENTRAL REGION

The recently released Queensland Government Review of Boards and Statutory Authorities has the potential to benefit farmers not only in the Central Region but right across the state.

The review recommended – and the Queensland Government has agreed ...30▷

ACFA CALENDAR

MAY

- 20/05/2009 (Wed)**
ACFA Conference – Western Suburbs League's Club
Branscombe Road, Walkerston via Mackay
10:30am – 5:00pm (Registration at 10:00am)
- 21/05/2009 (Thur)**
Mackay Regional Sugar Festival
BSES Field Day (Mackay)
- 22/05/2009 (Fri)**
Mackay Regional Sugar Festival
BSES Field Day (Mackay)
QLD Sugar Ltd Board Meeting (Brisbane)
- 23/05/2009 (Sat)**
Mackay Regional Sugar Festival
- 24/05/2009 (Sun)**
Mackay Regional Sugar Festival
- 25/05/2009 (Mon)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Condong, 11am
ACFA Branch Meeting – Broadwater, 7pm
- 26/05/2009 (Tue)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Harwood, 11am
- 28/05/2009 (Thur)**
BSES Field Day (Burdekin)
- 31/05/2009 (Sun) – 02/06/2009 (Tues)**
Kingsman Second Australian Sugar & Ethanol Conference
(The Sebel, Cairns)
www.kingsman.com/conferences

JUNE

- Date (TBA)**
SRDC Board Meeting (Brisbane)
- Date (TBA)**
SRDC Symposium on Bioenergy & Diversification
- 03/06/2009 (Wed)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Bundaberg, 7pm
- 04/06/2009 (Thur)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Maryborough, 7pm
- 05/06/2009 (Fri)**
CRC SIIB Board Meeting (Brisbane)
- 09/06/2009 (Tue)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Gordonvale, 2pm
ACFA Branch Meeting – Innisfail, 7.30pm
- 10/06/2009 (Wed)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Ingham, 7.30pm
- 11/06/2009 (Thur)**
ACFA Branch Meeting – Ayr, 7.30pm
- 17/06/2009 (Wed)**
BSES Board Meeting (Brisbane)
- 22/06/2009 (Mon) – 23/06/2009 (Tues)**
NFF Conference
(Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre)
<http://congress.nff.org.au/>
- 24/06/2009 (Wed)**
NFF Policy Council Meeting (Brisbane)
- 26/06/2009 (Fri)**
QLD Sugar Ltd Board Meeting (Brisbane)

<29...DISTRICT REPORTS

– Category Two Water Boards should be abolished and their responsibilities transferred to local governments. These bodies should then have the flexibility to determine between delivering local water services themselves, delegating them to local boards or using alternative (non-government) institutional arrangements, such as establishing local co-operatives or unincorporated associations.

This paves the way for the Pioneer Valley Water Board (PVWB) to convert to a co-operative that will be owned and operated by farmers.

The PVWB has been trying for a long time to achieve this outcome and it could now be possible subject to Mackay Regional Council (MRC) agreement.

It is to be hoped the MRC is supportive and the outcome should be positive for the entire region.

The Central Region Sugar Group met with the recently appointed QSL Board on April 23 and stressed the need for farmers to be fully included in all activities, the need for and the importance of QSL's Board visits to the regions and the need for port costs to be minimised.

QSL Chairman Alan Winney was supportive and stressed the importance of minimising costs and maximising returns.

Mackay Sugar Ltd has unveiled a plan to encourage land to be bought into sugar cane production. Mackay Sugar Ltd is offering a fixed price of \$450 per tonne IPS for up to 80 tonnes of cane per hectare produced every year from 2010 to 2013. This equates to approximately \$38 per tonne of cane annually for the next four years.

Farmers must give an undertaking to plant the land before September 2009.

Ross Walker
ACFA Central Region Director
April 30, 2009

SOUTHERN REGION

It's that time of year when farmers see if their efforts are paying off. In the Isis area a large proportion of blocks are shaping up better than they've been for years.

Timely rainfall and a desire to capitalise on this years improving sugar price must be behind this. I know I am continuing to irrigate.

****Denotes Plant Breeders Association** 

Soybean harvesting has been relatively free of wet weather despite initial concerns. Good productivity and sample quality have been regular occurrences.

A panel with a wealth of experience with members drawn from Maryborough and Bundaberg ran soybean harvesting loss monitoring workshops. They were well attended and emphasised the collaboration between growers and harvesting crews – well worth the time.

A revisit of this within sugar cane may be timely with better prices on the horizon.

Sugar Industry Field Days have been well attended. It was indeed a pleasure to go back to the Bundaberg Station and bump into the old gang.

A lot was learned and the delivery of technical information was friendly as all the presenters were patient with our questions.

Since my three brothers and I have become Bundaberg Sugar suppliers as administrators of our brother Stephen's estate, I attended the Tegege Cane Trends Field Day.

What a surprise! I would say any local farmer who did not put aside half a day to take a look has let themselves down. One great aspect was the way in which efficiency gains with current equipment were showcased.

The sugar price may be trending up, but we haven't seen the money yet, so we've got to make the most of the equipment we've got. Perhaps much of the new technology will come onto farms in the next year or two.

Giving cane farmers the opportunity to have a few hours to network with other farmers in a commercial setting made for a great day and I congratulate the organisers.

Water for irrigation issues will not go

away in this area. Anyone willing to put time into lobbying for a better outcome should contact ACFA's Brisbane Office or myself. Local issues need local input.

With backup from our Head Office staff and Chairman Ross Walker, we will get to talk to people who actually make decisions – decisions about your future.

As the crush approaches, I return to maintaining harvesting gear. I have driven the country roads in our area and I know that this year, my gear will be harvesting some pretty good crops.

Mike Hetherington
ACFA Southern Region Director
April 30, 2009

NEW SOUTH WALES

The young cane crops are looking very good in all three mill sites and with improved prices growers are looking forward to better returns than previous years.

The harvesting of soybeans and rice has been dramatically effected by the recent rain.

Some crops of these were lost due to the large rainfall we experienced in late March and early April. Those farmers with crops are trying to harvest but the wet field conditions are making this rather difficult.

Both of the co-generation plants are performing well and are currently running on a mixture of bagasse and camphor.

The cane harvest season is due to commence in all three New South Wales mill sites on June.

Wayne Rodgers
ACFA New South Wales Director
April 30, 2009



ANSWER TO IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR QUIZ

The tractor is a 1920 Canadian 14-28, manufactured by The Alberta Foundry & Machine Company of Medicine Hat, Alberta. The horizontal two cylinder engine developed 28 HP. Both the single rail chassis and the rear wheel spokes were manufactured from Canadian hardwood. The photos were taken in Canada and are of the only two remaining examples. The green tractor photo shows the author at the controls.

