



ISSUE 13 – DECEMBER 2013

Welcome to the Christmas issue of our BPS newsletter.

We hope you find the articles contained in this issue informative.

This issue contains:

- BPS Activities
- Pachymetra
- Itch Grass
- RSD and Hire Equipment
- Sorghum
- Pig Shooting
- YCS update
- Website
- Productivity Data

BPS ACTIVITIES

Staff are currently visiting all growers in their respective Mill areas to collect crop data and seedcane orders. Seedcane orders have to be in by 31st March so we can do calculations if varieties are oversubscribed. ***If you fail to place your seedcane order by the due date we will not be able to distribute any seedcane to you.***

Crop data recording is important to our business and to the district. Once collected we enter the data into our recording software AgDat. The programme allows us to search information so that if a disease outbreak occurred (for example RSD) we can identify all other farms that may possibly have the same issues. The programme also allows us to see the spread of pests and diseases across the district so that we can monitor and respond with information to assist affected growers.

PACHYMETRA

BPS staff this year conducted a strategic survey to determine the distribution and severity of the disease. Twenty soil samples were collected over each mill area. The samples were taken over a range of soil types and specifically targeted susceptible varieties in Ratoon cane. Susceptible varieties are Tellus, Q133, Q171 & Q177. Intermediate susceptible varieties are Q252, Q240, Q232, Q200, Q208 & KQ228.

If industry waits until a root problem develops, management will be more difficult. Only one sample of Q171 collected in the Inkerman area was elevated with a reading of 89,248. SRA staff have indicated that large yield losses can be expected in this susceptible variety. Care should be taken when replanting that you only plant a resistant variety.

BPS staff will continue to monitor the distribution and severity as we go forward by taking twenty five samples in a different mill area each year. You can find an information sheet on Pachymetra root rot inserted in this newsletter. A table showing disease severity ratings is on Page 2 of the information sheet.

At this year's ASSCT conference this paper was presented:

"Surveys Assessing the Incidence and Severity of Pachymetra Root Rot in the Australian Sugarcane Industry" by RC Magarey, JI Bull and A Royal.

Following is the ABSTRACT from this paper:

PACHYMETRA ROOT ROT is one of the most important diseases in the Australian sugarcane industry. Surveys that either identified root symptoms or assessed soil oospore inoculum levels have provided important data on disease distribution and trends in disease severity within affected districts. Some regions have conducted semi-regular surveys; these include the Central and Bundaberg regions. Other districts have conducted surveys for specific purposes, such as scoping the distribution of the pathogen when first detected. In some districts, very few surveys have been conducted, leaving the local industry with little recent knowledge of the disease. The districts most severely affected by Pachymetra root rot are the wet tropics, Central, Bundaberg and some parts of New South Wales. Data are lacking for several northern mill areas; the Herbert district is also known to be badly affected but no recent surveys have been undertaken there. Further surveys would highlight to plant breeders the relative need in each district for the incorporation of resistance into new commercial varieties. We strongly suggest that the Australian sugarcane industry develops a strategy for routinely assessing both the incidence and / or severity of the disease in each region, to ensure effective district-wide management strategies are implemented.

ITCH GRASS

Rogueing commenced again on the 8th October. Weather permitting we intend to walk blocks on neighbouring farms of known Itch Grass locations to determine if it has spread. Results so far indicate that growers who are using residual herbicides are controlling and reducing the infestation levels of this noxious weed. It is also pleasing to note that growers are reporting sightings of Itch Grass in fields, drains etc. If you suspect you have sighted Itch Grass please contact your BPS field officer.

If your neighbour has Itch Grass and it is not controlled it is only a matter of time before you have it.

Never obtain your planting material from a known Itch Grass block.

After harvesting a block of cane infested with Itch Grass ensure all machinery is thoroughly cleaned to contain its spread. This also applies to hire equipment including laser planes, rotary hoes, discs, stool splitters etc.



RSD and HIRE EQUIPMENT

This year BPS field staff collected close to 1,000 commercial cane samples from growers for analysis at the SRA facility in Brisbane. This year the samples were taken in the Kalamia and Inkerman mill areas. Next year we will collect another 1,000 samples for RSD testing in the Pioneer and Invicta mill areas. All Mother Plots and all Distribution Plots are tested every year to ensure the approved seedcane is disease free. It is pleasing to report that all RSD results from these plots came back negative.

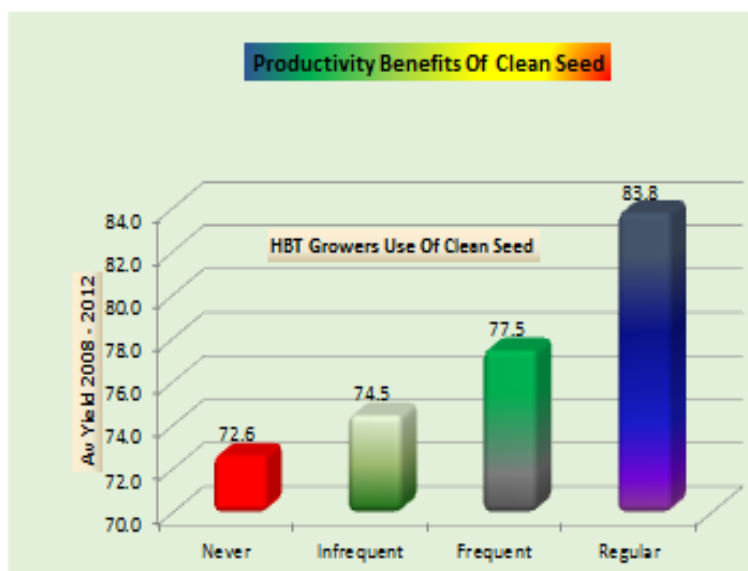
It is of great concern to BPS, that the hire equipment moving around the district from grower to grower is doing so without being sterilized. This equipment mainly includes stool splitters and Confidor/Suscon applicators. **To ensure you do not get RSD, best practice would be for you to sterilize any hire equipment before using it.** Unfortunately the practice of sterilizing cane planters/harvesters used for planting has gone out the window. This is bad practice and a certain way to spread disease.

Remember it is necessary to obtain some approved seedcane from the Distribution Plots every year. This ensures you start off with disease free cane.

Below is a graph we have obtained from HCPSL which clearly indicates the benefits of obtaining approved seedcane.

CLEAN SEED

This article was sourced from HCPSL (Ingham Area)



This becomes more significant for the Herbert productivity when only 18% of growers frequently use clean seed.

SORGHUM

Unfortunately sorghum has spread in great proportions all over the district in the past year. If identified and rogued early it is easy to control. There are a number of residual herbicides registered to control sorghum. We believe that flocks of geese have contributed to the spread of sorghum.

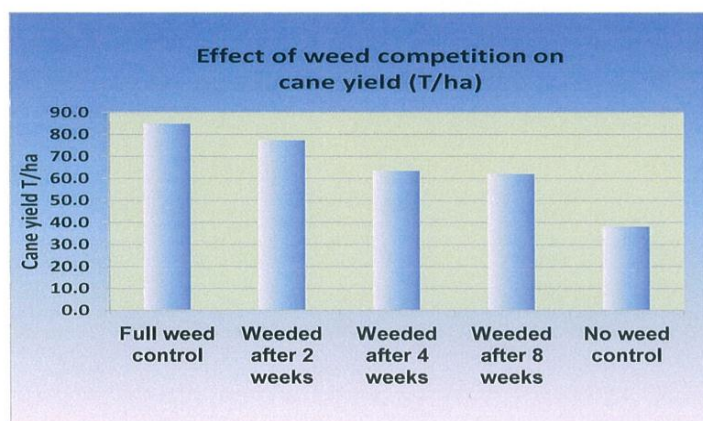


Growers who have the amount of sorghum shown above are just plain irresponsible and are assisting the spread of sorghum onto clean paddocks and neighbouring farms.

These articles appeared in the "Sunshine Sugar Agricultural Services" newsletter. I believe they are of interest to growers so they are included in this newsletter for your perusal.

DELAYED WEED CONTROL COSTS BIG \$

A replicated trial in the Tweed showed that for every week weed control is delayed; cane yield reduces by 2.9 t/ha. At a net cane price after harvesting of \$25 per tonne this is worth \$72 per ha or \$2,175 across 30 ha of cane. And this is for just one week of delay!



In this plant cane trial some plots received full weed control while weed control was commenced at 2, 4 or 8 weeks in other plots. One set of plots got no weed control. The no weed control plots averaged 38 t/ha compared to the plots with full weed control which averaged 84.9 t/ha. The major weeds in the trial were barnyard grass, giant paspalum and *Cuphea*.

Two applications of pre-emergent herbicide cost just over \$100 per ha. You'll recoup this money with just 1½ weeks of weed free growth. After that the profit is yours.



For advice on weed control see your agricultural officer or chemical reseller.

SRA REPORT ON HARVESTER LOSSES IN NSW

In September this year a team from Sugar Research Australia measured harvester losses from a number of local machines. As well as taking field measurements, Cam Whiteing and his team spoke to harvester drivers, farmers and mill staff.



Straight rows are the starting point for a good harvest job.

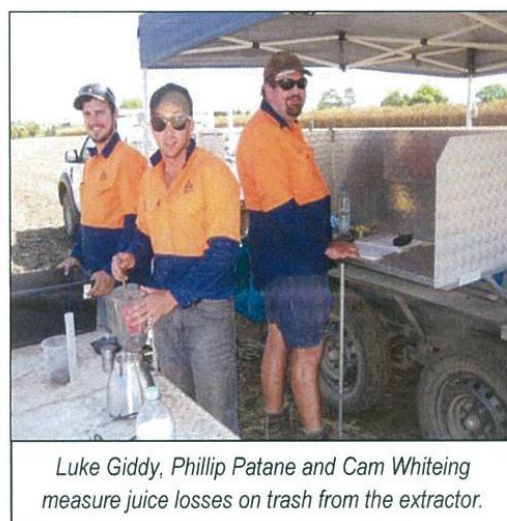
The overwhelming feedback from harvester drivers is that row profile (hill shape) is 'the major factor affecting their ability to gather sprawling crops without leaving cane behind or sending in dirt and stool'. Drivers also said that narrow and/or uneven row spacings 'make it hard to stay on the centre of the row without running down the adjacent row'.

While it's too late to 'straighten' rows or change row spacings now, we are coming up to the time when farmers are finishing off blocks and determining the shape the driver will see next time the block is harvested.

To help harvester drivers do the best job for you, form a slight mound around your rows. Avoid having a hollow in the middle of the mound where stalks can lay. Talk to your harvester driver to see what he prefers and above all mound up consistently across the block and along the row.

During their visit Cam and his team also measured the effects of varying extractor speed, ground speed and cutting height. In two trials to compare different fan speeds the highest speeds resulted in large cane losses.

If you would like a full copy of the report please contact your local agricultural officer. Harvesting is the single most critical operation in the crop cycle. Let's work together to get it right.



Luke Giddy, Phillip Patane and Cam Whiteing measure juice losses on trash from the extractor.

	Fan speed	Tonnes sugar/ha lost	\$/ha lost
Trial 1	900 rpm	0.42	\$175
	1000 rpm	0.79	\$330
	1150 rpm	1.15	\$485
Trial 2	800 rpm	0.28	\$115
	1100 rpm	0.37	\$155

These trials have been done in the Burdekin by BSES so they are not new. Grass in the crop has a detrimental effect in cane all along the coast.

PIG SHOOTING

This year has seen quite successful pig shooting carried out from a helicopter. Results follow:

Jardine - 4 shoots - 40 pigs

Baratta - 3 shoots - 90 pigs

Coastal Shoot - 2 shoots - 220 pigs

Former Senior Zoologist, Dr Jim Mitchell, maintains that numbers have to be reduced by 70% per year for three consecutive years to have a long term effect. Council still provide free of charge 1080 baiting to landholders for feral pig control.

YELLOW CANOPY SYNDROME (YCS) UPDATE

Growers are reminded to contact any BPS staff member if you see or suspect symptoms of YCS in your crop. BPS are mapping the blocks with confirmed symptoms and sharing this information with the research team at SRA to try and understand more about the syndrome. To date around 80 blocks have been mapped since August this year and BPS would like to know as soon as growers see symptoms appear. Some of the blocks identified earlier in the year are no longer showing symptoms, and most identified blocks at this point in time look generally healthy.

A series of field trials are underway to try and understand either the cause or what treatment options may reduce symptoms of YCS. These trials cover the whole range of farming inputs including fertiliser, chemicals, irrigation, soil type, variety, insects and plant source. BPS is hosting two of the trials. One looking at whether weed and other grass species show symptoms of YCS – this is being conducted in pots situated beside a block of cane. Another pot trial at the BPS office is looking at the effect of cold soak hot water treated cane compared to non-treated cane across 8 varieties.



Joe Savorgnan and Rob Milla monitoring the YCS pot trial

WEBSITE

BPS has finally got it's website up and going. For all your information needs regarding pest and disease visit www.bps.net.au or contact your field officer.

The site is full of useful information like daily evaporation rate, hot topics, industry links and has staff profiles as well as directors profiles. Our newsletters and annual reports are posted under "BPS News" and the "Seedcane Plots" show what varieties are available from our plots in 2014. If you have machinery coming into the district or are sending machinery out of the district it is important that you use the checklist before contacting one of our 5 inspectors to come and do an inspection. The checklist can be found under "Machinery Movement". The section you will use the most will be the 'Improve Productivity" section as it has information relating to varieties, pest and disease, crop needs, harvesting and precision agriculture, and equipment calibration information. So have a browse round, and let us know what you think. Your feedback is important to developing and making the site better.

PRODUCTIVITY DATA

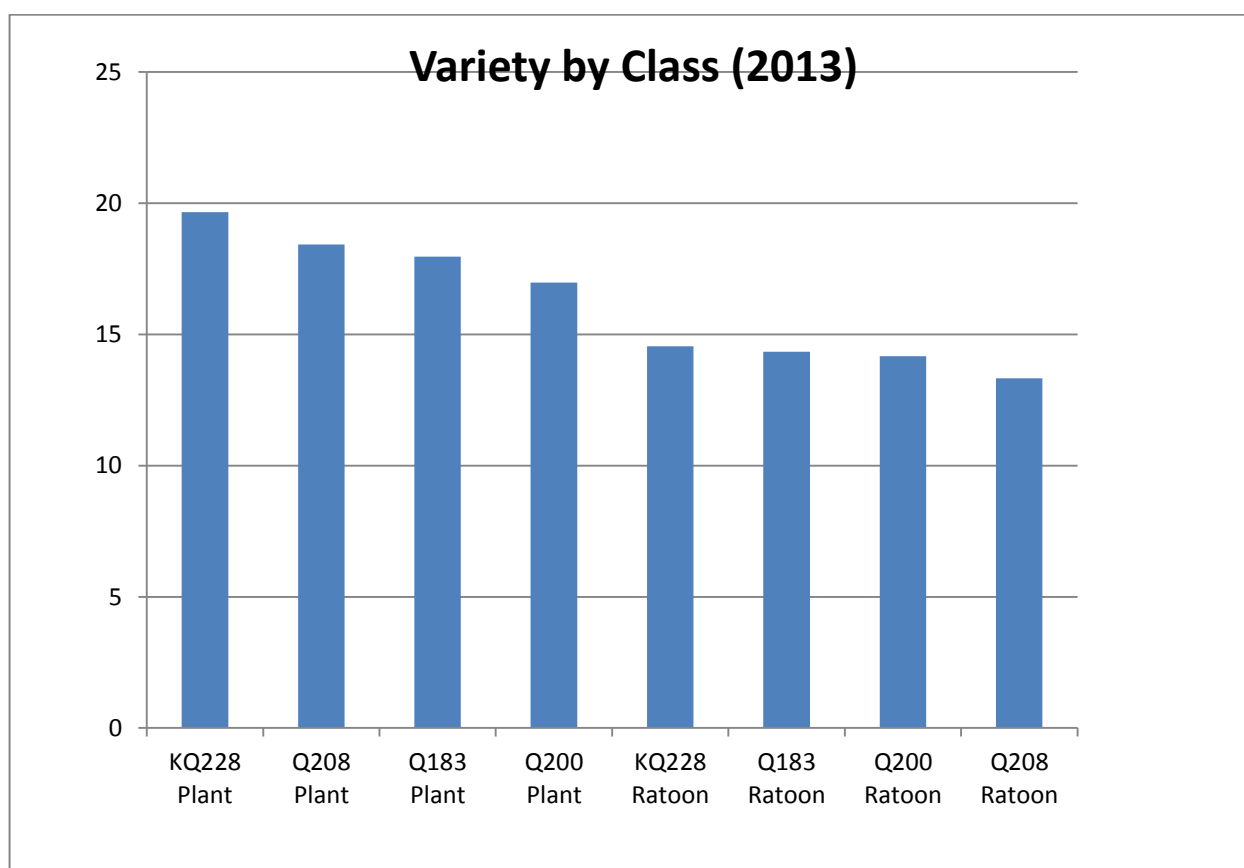
	Average	
	2013	2012
Tonnes (ha)	105.54	107.23
CCS	14.54	14.18
Sugar Yield (ha)	15.35	15.19

The Kilrie productivity group had the highest tonnes per hectare for the second year running and this year had the highest tonnes of sugar per hectare. Mulgrave had the highest CCS for the second year running but had a drop in cane yield of 6 tonnes per hectare.

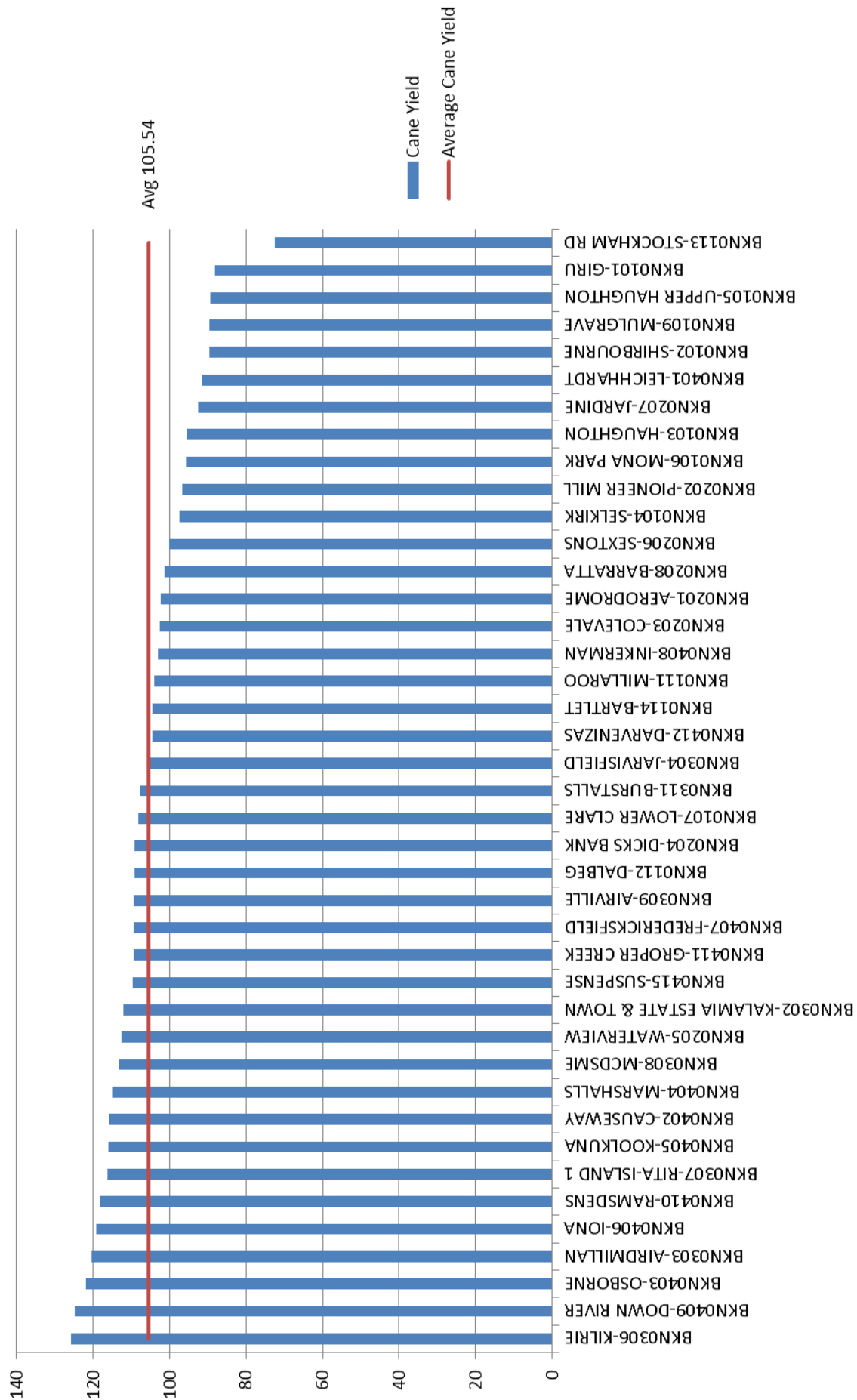
The 2013 season crop comprised 41.6% (KQ228), 31.1% (Q183), 22.6% (Q208) and 4.7% other varieties. Of other varieties Q200 represented 1.5%.

Eighteen groups produced below average Tonnes of sugar per hectare and of these, sixteen groups finished below last year's average.

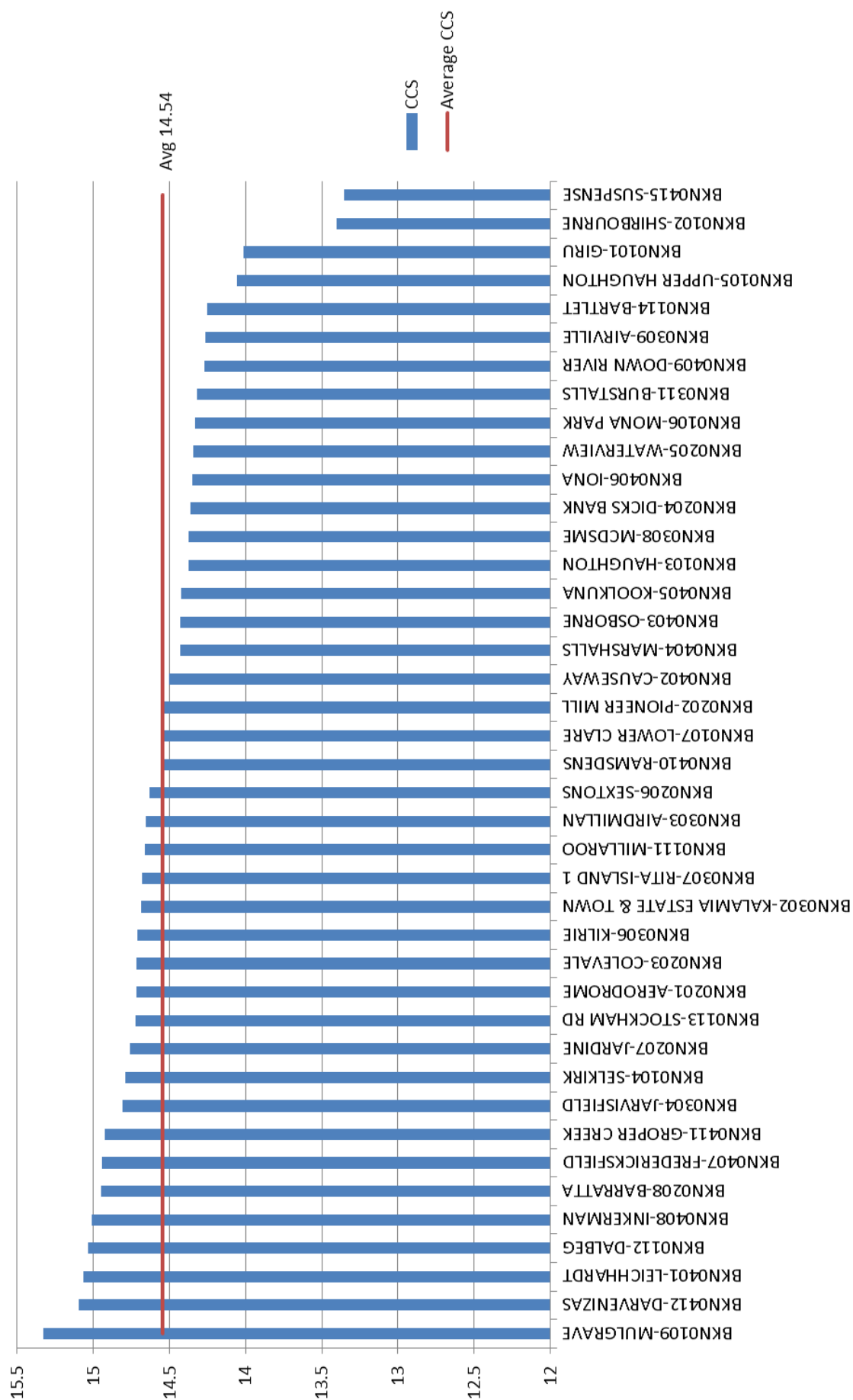
Eighteen groups had below average CCS but only four groups had CCS that was below last year's average.



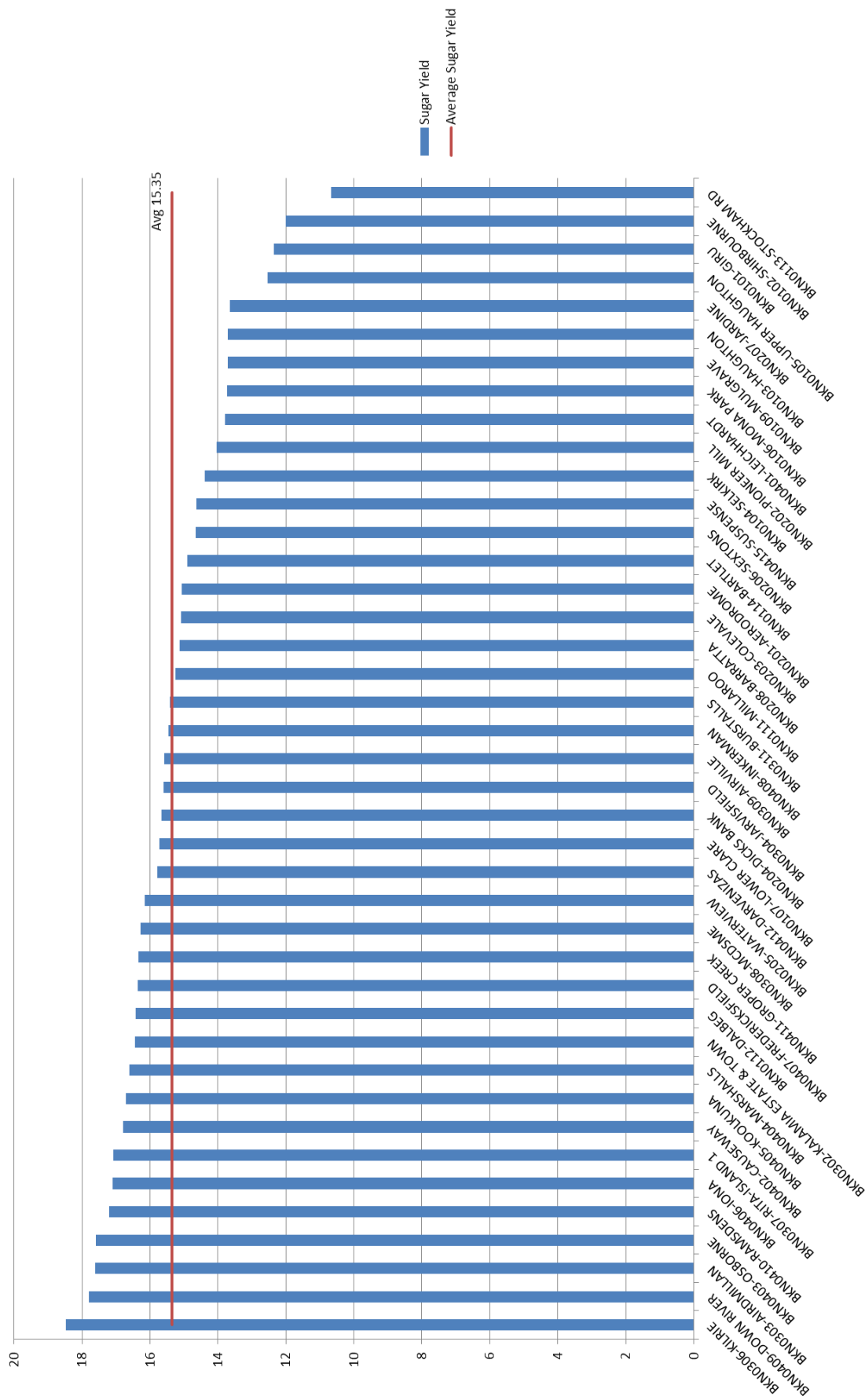
T/ha by Productivity Group (2013)



CCS by Productivity Group (2013)



TSH/ha by Productivity Group (2013)





Congratulations to Kristine on her wedding to Troy Patti on the 21st September 2013. Management and staff wish you and Troy all the best for your life together.

Talking Point
Photography
www.talkingpointphotography.com

OTHER NEWS

It is with regret that BPS announces the resignation of Lance Wassmuth as the Business Services Co-ordinator effective from 31st December. We wish Lance and his family all the best as he embarks on his new career.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my staff at BPS for a job well done. Finally I would like to thank all the growers and Wilmar for their support that we have received throughout the year.



Wishing growers a merry christmas and a happy and prosperous new year

Our office will be closed from 4pm Friday 20th December and will re-open 7am Monday 6th January.

Staff Contacts

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Kristine Patti	Field Officer - Pioneer	0407 167 159	kgrasso@bps.net.au
Joe Savorgnan	Field Officer	0407 960 057	jsavorgnan@bps.net.au

Upcoming Events

Grower Information Meeting

5th March 2014

Ayr Showgrounds

Seedcane order closing date

31st March 2014

If you would like any further information or like to list an important grower event then please contact Margaret to have it added.