



ISSUE 11 - MAY 2013



GROWER MEETINGS

BPS has started to hold small productivity group grower shed meetings. Many growers have suggested a move back to the smaller informal type shed meetings to discuss the most relevant agronomic and farming system issues. BPS plans to hold 2 – 3 rounds of meetings per year (depending on issues and season) for each of the productivity groups. Meetings around May/June will be focussed on nutrition and irrigation of plant cane as well as updates on yellow leaf.

The shed meetings are being facilitated by Rob Milla (BPS) and Evan Shannon (Farmacist) with assistance from the local BPS field officer. An SMS will be sent out letting growers know when their meeting will be held. If you have any suggestions for relevant topics or information you would like, please contact Rob Milla at BPS. The intent of these meetings is to ensure that growers are discussing issues related directly to their farm productivity and profitability and to share ideas amongst each other.

VARIETY TRIALS

Three replicated variety strip trials have been planted over the last month in the three major soil groups (sandy loam, clay loam, heavy clay). The intent of these trials is to provide some more commercially harvested and managed data on some of the newer varieties to allow the industry to better understand the performance of a particular variety and how it compares to others in the same paddock. These trials are comparing Q240, Q252 (QA00-3093), Q253 (QA01-5153) and a grower standard (Q183 or Q208). These trials will be monitored as they progress through the growing season and through to harvest. If anyone would like to visit any of the trial sites please contact BPS. BPS will also organise a few field walks throughout the season for interested growers.

DUAL HERBICIDE SPRAYER

With increased interest in banded application of residual herbicides, DAFF staff from Innisfail have been experimenting with cost effective ways to band apply residuals over the row, and use knockdowns (particularly glyphosate) in the furrow. While a number of growers have used shielded sprayers with excellent results, this can be an expensive investment for a grower with small areas. A prototype dual herbicide spray bar has been developed to replace the existing spray bar on an Irvin Boom. A 12V pump and small tank is retro fitted to the standard Irvin Boom to allow glyphosate to be sprayed in the furrow area through a low drift air induction nozzle (without shields). This idea has been tested in a number of paddocks in the Wet Tropics with no measureable effect on growth rates of the cane. Some demonstrations of this boom are planned during August/September so growers can see it in action.

“Three replicated variety strip trials have been planted over the last month in the three major soil groups (sandy loam, clay loam, heavy clay)” Rob Milla

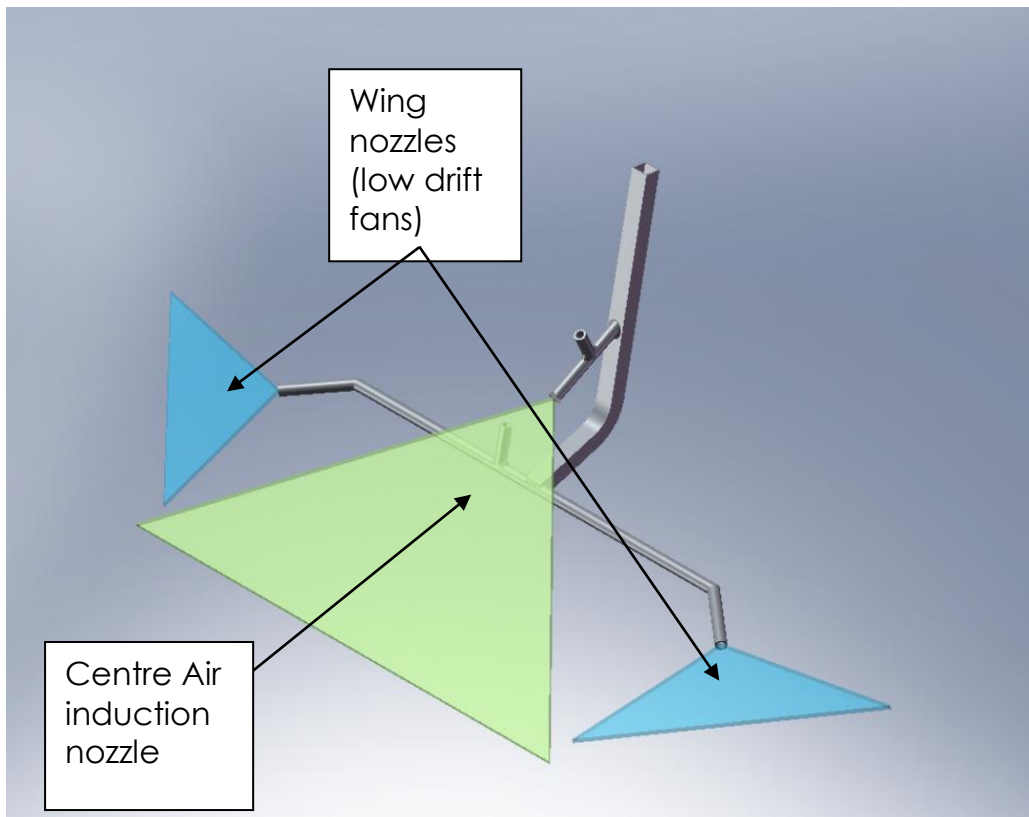


Figure 1: Dual herbicide spray bar



Figure 2: Dual herbicide spray bar. Glyphosate is applied through the centre Nozzle and other herbicide mixes applied through the 2 wing nozzles

SODIC SOILS INFORMATION

Sodic soils occur in a large percentage of the Burdekin area and can raise a number of management challenges and reduce crop yield potential significantly. Sodic soils have less soil structure, are difficult to irrigate and soak, and can have limited water holding capacity. BPS is organising for a sodic soils expert to come to the region and hold a workshop on understanding sodic soils and discussing management options. The workshop will also cover saline soils and rising groundwater tables. Roger Shaw has had experience in assessment of soils for irrigation in Queensland for over 40 years in the Emerald, Burdekin, Murgon, St George and Lockyer Valley regions and more recently on groundwater issues in the Burdekin irrigation area. He has been actively involved in irrigation water quality assessment, soil and water salinity and sodicity issues in Queensland and nationally and served on national committees. This workshop will be an invaluable opportunity to learn more about sodic soils and management options and to discuss individual issues with Roger and other industry representatives. At this stage the workshop will be held at the Clare Club on Thursday 4th July from 9am-1pm.

HARVESTING LOSSES

Harvesting losses are a major cost to the sugar industry, particularly the loss of millable cane extracted by the cleaning system in green cane harvesting. A recent BSES project (BSS318 funded by SRDC) has developed a mobile sugar loss measurement system which enables researchers to measure the sugar content of the trash blanket and provide immediate feedback to the harvester operator. Rather than trying to identify smashed billets to provide crude estimates of cane loss, this world first method collects and weighs the trash blanket (containing trash, tops, billets, juice) which is then processed to obtain a liquid extract. The liquid extract is then analysed in the field to give a measure of the sugar content.

The dollar value of sugar losses at different extractor fan speeds can then be compared against the quality of cane going to the mill to enable operators to maximize returns to growers and industry. BSES researchers Cam Whiteing and Luke Giddy will be doing field trials with Rob Milla from BPS during the 2013 harvest season to help spread awareness of harvesting losses to help benefit the Burdekin sugar industry. Anyone cutting cane green this year should contact Rob on 0490 036 329 if they'd like to be involved in this program.

Staff Contacts

Contact	Title	Contact Number	Email
Office		(07) 4783 1101	reception@bps.net.au
Fax		(07) 4783 5327	
210 Old Clare Road, Ayr QLD 4807			
PO Box 237, Ayr QLD 4807			
John Deambrosis	Manager	0428 927 079	jdeambrosis@bps.net.au
Lance Wassmuth	Business Services Co-ordinator	0427 834 800	lance.wassmuth@bps.net.au
Rob Milla	Extension Agronomist	0490 036 329	rmilla@bps.net.au
Raymond Hildebrandt	Field Officer - Inkerman	0409 831 863	rhildebrandt@bps.net.au
David Paine	Field Officer - Kalamia	0427 167 159	dpaine@bps.net.au
Wayne Squires	Field Officer - Invicta	0427 372 124	wsquires@bps.net.au
Kristine Grasso	Field Officer - Pioneer	0407 167 159	kgrasso@bps.net.au
Joe Savorgnan	Trainee Field Officer - Inkerman	0407 960 057	jsavorgnan@bps.net.au

Precision Agriculture (PA) Workshop in the Burdekin

Most growers know that things like soils and elevation vary across a farm resulting in yield variability, but you might be surprised at how big differences in yield can be. Precision Agriculture (PA) can help you manage variability and increase the efficiency of your farming operation. In recent years, the sugarcane industry has seen rapid adoption of GPS guidance and controlled traffic technologies in some areas, however, the adoption of these technologies has not always translated into Precision Agriculture (Figure 1).

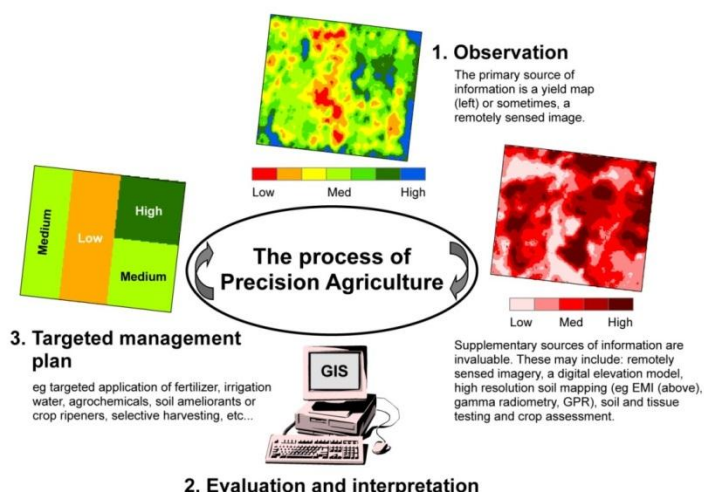


Figure 1. The cyclical process of PA

Figure 1 presents a well-used graphic for PA which emphasises the fact that it is an information-rich approach to farm management. Growers who use PA collect data about agricultural productivity and the characteristics of the land supporting this production to inform management decisions. This approach to farm management increases the likelihood that management decisions will give you the results you expect when compared to more traditional uniform management.

A PA workshop is being conducted in your area for anyone who is interested in learning more about PA and how to use it on your farm. Presenters will be Troy Jensen (researcher at National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture) and Summer Olsen (BSES PEC Officer).

When: Tuesday, June 25

Where: The Clare Club

Cost: No charge

What: Topics that will be covered in the half-day workshop include

GPS/GNSS	GIS	Remote Sensing
Variable Rate Technology		Yield Monitoring

The workshop will finish with lunch, and the presenters will be available afterwards to chat and answer questions.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Summer Olsen on 07 4783 8602 or solsen@bses.com.au.