



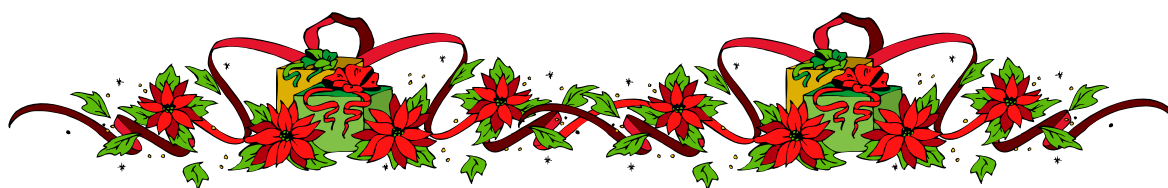
ISSUE 16 – DECEMBER 2014

Welcome to the December issue of our BPS newsletter. We hope you find the articles contained in this issue informative.



This issue contains:

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STAFF CHANGES

Tiffany Hunt – Extension Agronomist

Tiffany is the newest member of the BPS team. From north-west New South Wales, she is new to the sugar industry and is very keen to apply her training to assist local growers. Tiffany is a recent graduate (Bachelor of Rural Science and Honours, UNE) having completed her studies in 2013. She will be working with growers to implement strip trials investigating the use of gypsum and lime, as well as nitrogen strip trials with enhanced efficiency products at various rates and times of application. Tiffany comes from a rural background with her family involved in grazing and pasture crops. Tiffany has a strong interest in working with growers to optimise productivity. Tiffany is the third member of the expanding BPS extension team and will be mentored by Marian Davis and Rob Milla.



Brendan Montafia – Trainee Agronomist

BPS has great pleasure in announcing the appointment of our first trainee agronomist, Brendan Montafia. He will be working full time in field operations during the day then completing a Bachelor of Applied Science degree at the University of Queensland in his spare time. As it involves external study, his degree may take up to 6 years to complete. It will be hard work, but Brendan is very capable.

Brendan was school captain at BCHS this year and hails from a well-respected family who have been growing cane in the Burdekin for several generations. He has worked part time with local resellers of farm products, A & B Rural, where he has gained valuable product knowledge pertaining to chemicals and fertilizers. He has also completed work experience with agricultural consultancy group, Farmacist.



We are very excited about the trainee program and look forward to having Brendan on board.

BPS ACTIVITIES

Since the September edition, staff have been examining plant cane and ratoons; collecting crop data and updating computer records; inspecting seed cane plots; taking soil samples for pachymetra and nematode testing; and organising itch grass and sorghum rogueing on affected farms. Robert Walsh, alias 'Rabs', has again been employed as chief destroyer of itch grass. He has been ably supported by a Swedish backpacker named Alex Rydelstatt. They have been doing a marvelous job in eradicating the pest on various properties.



There has also been a complete round of shed meetings conducted in recent weeks. For those members who were unable to attend a shed meeting, there are articles in this newsletter that are based on the presentations made.

UPATE FROM THE PLOTS

BPS mother and distribution plots in all areas have experienced excellent growth rates and special thanks goes to the various plot managers for a job well done. We have planted more area of the new varieties such as Q240, Q252 and Q253 to cope with anticipated demand. Other varieties available include KQ228, Q183, Q208, Q232 and some plots have Q247. There is no Q200 planted in the plots at present.

Field officers are in the process of collecting crop data from all members. If you haven't made a seed cane order for next year's planting season or you want to change an order, please call your relevant field officer. Seed cane orders can be made or changed up until March 2015.

When selecting seed cane to plant, it is important to match varieties to soil type. You must maintain a good mix of varieties and always remember that farm inputs may vary depending on the variety planted.

VARIETY GUIDE from QCaneSelect:

Variety:	Suited soils:	Productivity:		Fast and reliable Germination:	Seasonal sugar:		
		Yield:	CCS:		Early:	Mid:	Late:
Q253	Sodic/Sand/Saline.	Moderate-High	Low	Good	TBA	TBA	TBA
Q252	Silty Loam.	Moderate	Moderate-High	Average	TBA	TBA	TBA
Q247	Cracking clay, Non-Sodic Duplex, Silty Loam, Sodic Duplex, Sodic/Sand/Saline. <i>Note: Better varieties are available for these soil(s).</i>	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Average	Average	Average	Average
Q240	Cracking clay, Non-Sodic Duplex, Silty Loam.	High	Moderate	Good	Average	Average	Average
Q232	Cracking clay, Sodic Duplex. <i>Note: Better varieties are available for these soil(s).</i>	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor
KQ228	Non-Sodic Duplex, Silty Loam, Cracking clay.	High	Moderate	Good	Good	Average	Poor
Q208	Sodic Duplex, Silty Loam, Sodic/Sand/Saline, Non-Sodic Duplex, Cracking clay.	High	Moderate	Average	Average	Good	Good
Q200	Cracking clay, Non-Sodic Duplex, Silty Loam. <i>Note: Better varieties are available for these soil(s).</i>	Moderate	High	Average	Poor	Average	Good
Q183	Cracking clay, Non-Sodic Duplex, Sodic Duplex, Silty Loam.	High	Moderate	Good	Average	Average	Average

*TBA- To be advised.

SHED MEETINGS

The end of year shed meetings have just concluded. Attendance was very good considering they commenced while the harvest was still underway.

If you were unable to attend here is a brief overview of the topics that were discussed.

Ameliorants

BPS in conjunction with Evan Shannon will be conducting gypsum and lime trials across the district. Also gypsum quality can be variable; if using gypsum with a low sulphur percentage, a higher rate will need to be applied to get the same effect as a higher quality gypsum.

Local water quality monitoring and pesticide management

Water quality monitoring of local waterways is continuing with a range of pesticides being detected, though usually at low levels. Diuron was specifically mentioned because there have been instances when the levels detected have exceeded the irrigation water threshold. Growers should always ensure that timing, rate and placement of all pesticide products follow label directions and be particularly mindful of irrigation losses post application of these products.

Smartcane BMP

All growers are encouraged to undertake the Smartcane BMP self-assessment. For more information contact Gary Halliday (4790 3600) or Farmacist (4783 7266).

Irrigation and RWUE-IF

Electricity costs can be a major component of all growing costs. Two ways for growers to manage these costs are to check that they're on the correct tariff and to see if they can improve their irrigation efficiency. By monitoring a series of irrigation events we can see the impact that even a light cultivation can have and how the irrigation efficiency improves as the soil becomes consolidated following the cultivation.

RWUE-IF funding is still available to growers in the Burdekin Groundwater Management Area.

Legumes

Brief discussion on legume fallows. Mungbean prices are particularly attractive at the moment for anyone considering growing a grain crop.

Variety trial results

The results of the variety strip trials were presented. These were included in the last newsletter, which is available on the BPS website.

ITCH GRASS AND WILD SORGHUM

BPS are currently heavily involved in eradicating itch grass around the Airville area. We have Robert Walsh (Rabs) employed who has years of experience in rogueing paddocks for the pest. Backpacker labourer, Alex Rydelstatt has been trained by Rabs and the two men make a formidable team. The deal for growers is that Rabs and Alex will rogue an affected paddock and remove the plants by hand. You will not be charged for their services if you supply at least one other person to assist. If you don't arrange for someone to help, BPS will charge you for the service at cost of labour rates (approx. \$55/hr incl GST for 2 men).

Contact Dave Paine at the office if you require assistance with itch grass issues.

Wild sorghum is another pest that BPS would love to eradicate. It can also be controlled by rogueing and spraying. Wild sorghum rogueing is a service provided by BPS using the same personnel, but there is a fee attached whether help is provided or not (approx. \$55/hr incl GST for 2 men).

Summer fallow provides the best opportunity to control itch grass and wild sorghum with chemical spray application. Irrigate to allow the seeds to germinate then follow with a solid chemical application. Repeat the exercise, then a light cultivation will allow further germination of dormant seeds. Irrigate then spray again. Contact your field officer for a spray control program.

Itch grass: Hairs or spikes present on the stem, aerial roots are normally red/green in colour. Has a very distinctive seed head.



Wild sorghum: Leaves are smooth, no aerial roots. Large open seed head.



TARIFF CALCULATOR

Am I on the right tariff?

This is a question many growers are asking themselves in light of rapidly increasing electricity charges.

Local community organisation, BBIFMAC is currently running the Energy Efficiency Gains for Australian Irrigators project through which it has developed a number of tools to assist irrigators to reduce their electricity bills. More than 100 Burdekin cane growers have participated in the project to date.

The project has developed an easy to use "tariff calculator" that growers can use to compare all the currently available irrigation tariffs (based on the current pricing structure). The calculator is already saving growers money, with a number of users reporting potential savings of between \$5,000 and \$30,000 per year on accounts that could have been on cheaper tariffs.

The calculator enables growers to see the cost per day for each currently available irrigation tariff based on the usage entered (obtained from recent power bills) and the cheapest available tariff is highlighted. It is recommended that at least 12 months of usage data is entered to maximise the accuracy of the calculation (e.g. add up the usage data from four quarterly power bills and ensure you change the number of billing days on the calculator to 365).

The BBIFMAC project has also developed a number of Fact Sheets, including one explaining all the available irrigation tariffs in detail and their current pricing structure.

The Tariff Calculator and Fact Sheets are available from the project web-page (Energy Efficiency Gains for Australian Irrigators) which can be found at www.bbifmac.org.au

For more information and assistance please contact Arwen Rickert, Project Manager, BBIFMAC at 2/20 Queen Street Ayr or call 4783 4344 or email arwen@bbifmac.org.au

Arwen Rickert

Project Manager

Energy Efficiency Gains for Australian Irrigators (EEGAI)



HARVESTING SPEED PROJECT UPDATE

As reported in the last newsletter, BPS were successful in receiving funding from Sugar Research Australia (SRA) to conduct a three year trial examining the effect of harvester speed on yield and subsequent ratooning.

Speed trials were conducted on six plant cane blocks; four in the BRIA and two in the Delta with the varieties Q183 and Q208. At each site there were three speeds, except the first site where the crop size limited the forward speed to 7 km/h, so only two speeds were possible (Table 1). For most of the sites the crop size (or ground conditions) limited the maximum speed to 9km/h. In order to get a range of speeds, including the recommended 7km/h, it was necessary to have a very low speed of 5km/h. We understand that this isn't a viable option in all but the very largest of crops.

Site	Date harvested	Variety	Harvester speeds km/h
Site 1	25/8/14	Q208	5, 7
Site 2	3/9/14	Q183	5, 7, 9
Site 3	17/9/14	Q183	5, 7, 9
Site 4	18/9/14	Q183	5, 7, 9
Site 5	16/10/14	Q208	5, 7, 9
Site 6	4/11/14	Q208	7, 9, 11

These are replicated strip trials with nine plots per trial. In each of these 9 plots we had 4 sub-plots, each 10m long where we took our measurements. At harvest we collected: the number of stools and gaps in each 10m sub-plot and the plot yield. This gave us baseline data. As well as the field data, information was collected for DAFF to do some economic modelling on the costs of harvesting at different speeds. This is currently being analysed. Since harvest we have been conducting shoot, stool and gap counts on the same 10m sub-plots. The first counts, 1 month post-harvest, have been collected from all the trial plots and some sites have had a second 3 month count of the same data.

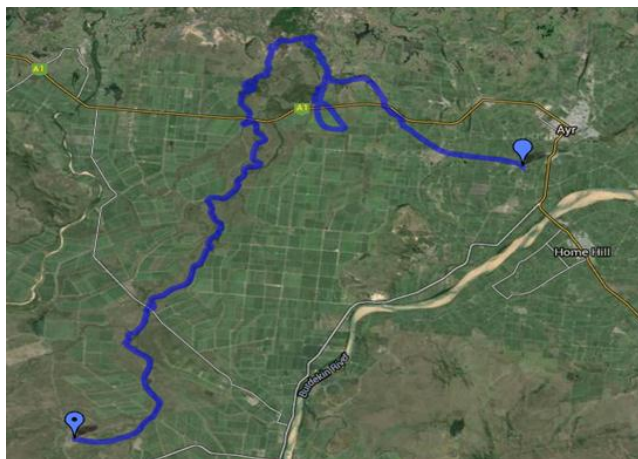
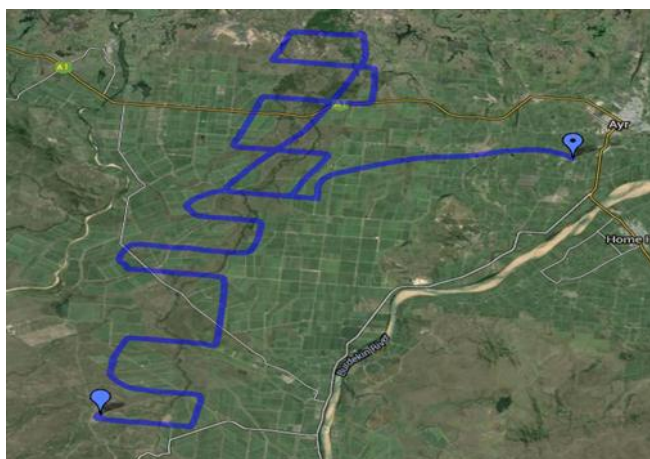
The data hasn't been analysed yet, this should happen early next year. So far it doesn't appear that harvester speed has had an impact on yield – any variation between plots seems to be related to soil type or irrigation. The effect on stool and gap counts is harder to assess and no conclusions can be drawn at this stage

At the next round of shed meetings the analysed results and the economic data will be available.

A big thank you to the growers and contractors who have been involved.

FERAL PIG ERADICATION

In conjunction with Merv Pyott of Wetland Care Australia, BPS officers took part in an aerial survey of the Barratta catchment area on Friday 5th December, 2014. A helicopter flight was organised to identify several hotspots for feral pig activity. Due to the dry conditions, it became abundantly clear that feral pigs are seeking refuge in and live in the cane paddocks rather than the dry riparian zones.



Flight route of aerial survey: left side - transect across the Barrattas from the coast to Woodhouse station; right side - following along Barratta Creek

BPS, then utilised project funding from the Wetland Care Australia project to contract professional shooters to seek out and destroy these feral pests. In the last few weeks, other aerial pig shoots have been organised and completed with many growers taking up the opportunity for a 50% subsidy from BPS as part of our feral pig eradication program. Council has also been active along the coastal strip with poison baiting and aerial shooting. Professional shooters operating via helicopter have been successful in destroying approximately 500 animals since mid November.

BPS data collected from the 2013 crop survey showed around 4200 Ha of cane area affected by pigs with an estimated 13 400 tonnes of cane lost.

BPS still has funding available to assist groups of 3 or more landholders with coordinated aerial pig shooting in high pressure areas. Up to \$750 in the form of a 50% subsidy can be accessed by forming a small grower group amongst your neighbouring farm owners and organising a professional aerial pig shoot. Please contact Mark Rickards on 0427 834 800 or your field officer if you want to benefit from this pig shooting subsidy. The application form can be viewed on the following page.

Burdekin Productivity Services Limited

ABN 18 107 846 060



210 Old Clare Road, AYR 4807
 PO Box 237 AYR 4807
 Phone: (07) 4783 1101
 Fax: (07) 4783 5327
 Email: reception@bps.net.au

Feral Pig Reimbursement Application

In order to be considered for partial re-imbursement for feral pig control via aerial shooting you must;

1. Be part of a group of growers (minimum 3) who are combining resources to shoot pigs in a co-ordinated manner
2. Complete this form prior to the aerial shoot
3. Pay the invoice and send copies to BPS for reimbursement
4. Report back the number of pigs shot

Conditions;

- BPS will reimburse grower groups 50% of costs up to a maximum of \$750 per year
- If the BPS allocated budget is exceeded, BPS may withdraw this opportunity
- The group must complete this form and report on the total pigs shot
- All growers must sign this form

Nominated grower to receive reimbursement on behalf of the group _____

Bank Ac Details BSB _____ Ac. _____ ABN. _____

Grower Group Details

Grower Name

Grower Signature

Region where shoot will occur (eg: Giru) _____

Number of pigs shot (complete after shoot) _____

COOTS (Purple Swamp Hen)

Growers are advised to be aware of the damage Coots can incur upon a sugar cane crop. The bird is a seasonal visitor to the region and, as the name infers, can be found around low lying swamp areas. They love nothing more than to venture out of the swamp into adjacent cane fields and feed on softer sections of the sugar cane plant. They can destroy emerging cane or mature plants during this feeding process.

Below are some photographs of damage Coots can inflict upon a crop of sugar cane.



Trampled cane



Stalks chewed out

RAT BAITING INFORMATION

With rats continuing to be an issue for many growers in the district, it becomes more important than ever to maintain our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with regards to the baiting of the Brown Rat and Climbing Rat species. Because these are native species, it is a requirement of the MOU to record all instances of baiting in the district. When the BPS field officer visits you to collect your data please remember to pass on your baiting information. All you need to report is the bait being used (Rattoff or Racumin) and the block numbers it was applied to. Also remember, that these two products are the **only two** registered for use in sugar cane.

In conjunction with all other productivity boards, BPS is contributing to a Rat Data portal. This information is compiled then submitted to a central point for dissemination. If we want to maintain permission to bait native rat species, accurate information must be collected and stored in this way.

RWUE-IF UPDATE

The RWUE-IF project is just wrapping up its first year and we thought this would be a good time to provide an update on what has been happening over the last 9 months or so.



The Burdekin RWUE-IF project is aimed at reducing deep drainage as a way to manage water table rise. This is being achieved in three ways:

1. Through the provision of extension advice on managing irrigation and improving efficiency
2. By installing dewatering bores in strategic areas of the Burdekin Groundwater Management Area
3. By providing financial incentives for growers to improve irrigation systems and management (for growers in the BGMA, Millaroo, Dalbeg and Leichhardt areas)

Dewatering

The dewatering component of the project is being managed by a technical panel that is responsible for deciding on the area to be targeted and the best places to install bores within that target area.

This year the focus was the Mulgrave area. It was chosen because the MAFIA group had already commenced work on installing groundwater bores and there are good surface water supplies for mixing. The RWUE project was able to build on the start made by the MAFIA group and assist with equipping those bores along with drilling one new bore. In this way the available funds were able to fund 5 dewatering bores rather than just the budgeted 2. Each dewatering bore is metered and is surrounded by observation bores that are equipped with monitoring equipment to measure depth to groundwater and conductivity (EC). The depth and EC monitoring results should be available next year.

The last of the bores became fully operational in November and by December 1 they had removed more than 200 ML from the groundwater. Water yields and quality vary quite a bit across the bores and the correct mixing ratio (ground to surface water) is crucial to ensure the water being applied is of suitable quality. The participating growers are active in testing the EC levels in their water to make sure it is mixing properly.



In 2015 the target area will be the Upper Houghton region.

Above: Dewatering bore discharging into cylinder where it mixes with channel water

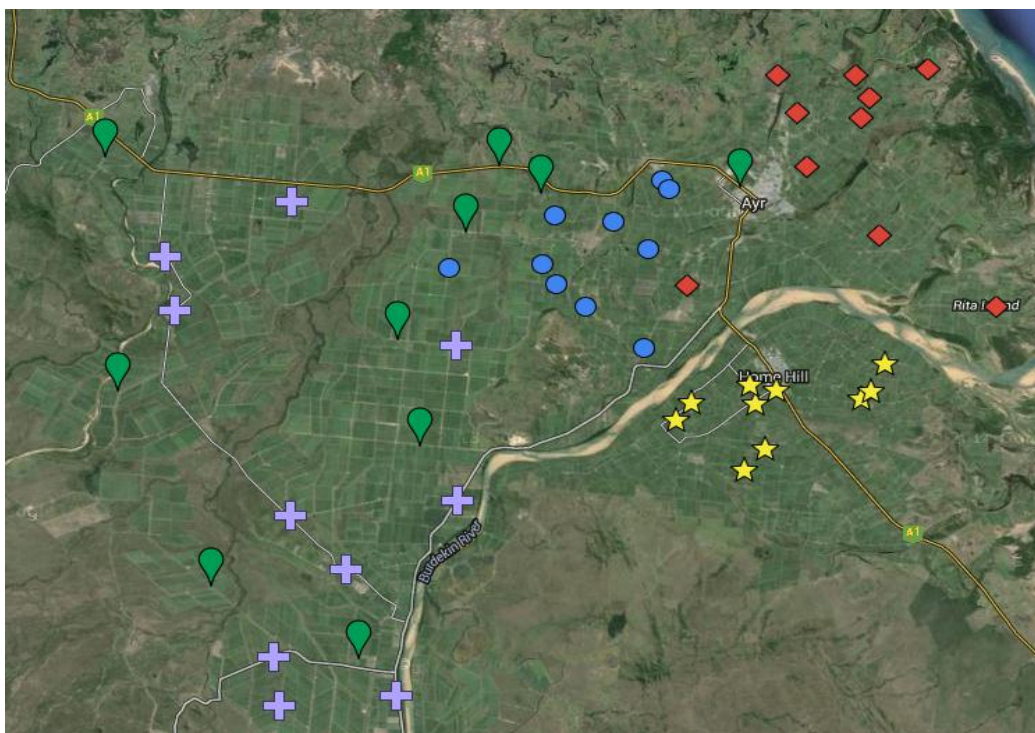
Financial incentives

Under the financial incentives scheme, growers are able to access up to \$40 000 in funding for practices that will reduce irrigation losses to deep drainage. So far a number of growers have taken the opportunity to be involved and have received funding for projects as diverse as: irrigation scheduling tools; pipelines and risers to improve inflow rates; and automation of irrigation.

The financial incentives scheme is continuing in 2015. Growers who are interested in finding out more about the RWUE-IF project or funding options should contact Marian Davis (RWUE-IF Project Officer) on 0428 927 079.

YCS MONITORING

From 1st December, 2014, SRA implemented new inspection protocols for BPS officers. Only 50 blocks of one variety (KQ228), from plant through to 2nd ratoon, will be monitored every second week. Firstly, staff will identify if the block has YCS symptoms. If it has, they rate the severity on a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being slightly affected, 2 moderately affected and 3 severely affected. Staff record their findings then send a detailed report of each block inspection to SRA along with a summary of the overall damage at each mill area. This inspection regime will continue for several months.



A map of the sites that will be monitored

DISPOSAL OF CONTAINERS

Keep your property and the Burdekin clean by disposing of used chemical containers at your local council Transfer Station (Rubbish Dump). There is no charge (FREE) so long as you comply with the following directives:

1. Must be in the original container (drumMUSTER eligible)
2. Container must be rinsed and free of any chemical residue
3. Container must be clean and dry
4. Metal containers must be punctured
5. All lids are to be removed.



Delivering drums in this way for safe disposal is not only good for the environment, but also enhances your ability to achieve Smartcane BMP status. Information on rinsing or answers to any other questions you might have can be found on www.drummuster.com.au or by calling the Qld regional consultant Colin Hoey on 0428 964 576.

DISPOSAL OF UNWANTED CHEMICALS.

Unused chemicals can become volatile & may present a danger to you, your family, the public and the environment. Get rid of them!!

Eligible chemicals are collected FREE OF CHARGE if they meet the following criteria:

1. Must be in the original container (drumMUSTER eligible)
2. Must have legible/readable product labels on container
3. Must not be mixed with other chemicals

If your unused chemicals do not meet these criteria, you can still dispose of them, but there is a fee per litre/kg.

Register for pick up by phoning toll free 1800 008 182 or register on the website www.chemclear.com.au

Remember, bookings are essential for this service.



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM ROB MILLA (MANAGER)

With 2014 almost behind us, I wanted to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and thank members for their support during the year. Results from the 2014 crush were certainly an improvement on last year and the 2015 crop is looking promising.

BPS will continue its focus on pest and disease management through crop surveys, on farm advice and provision of approved seed cane. In 2014 we distributed over 5500 T of approved seed cane and it is very pleasing to see an increasing number of growers regularly planting seed cane. YCS continues to be unsolved at this point, although the research teams are working hard at finding the cause and management options. BPS field officers will continue to monitor blocks throughout the next few months and provide these observations to the SRA research team. In terms of animal pests, increasing numbers of both pigs and cane grubs have been observed in high pressure areas. Unfortunately it appears the new 3 year Suscon Maxi product won't be available for the upcoming plant crop, however it should be available late 2015. Contact your field officer for advice on grub management, and give Mark Rickards a call at the office for information on our aerial pig shooting subsidy for small grower groups.

The BPS team is expanding a little more, with two new staff starting in January 2015. All the directors and myself are very happy to see some new young and enthusiastic faces in the local sugar industry. Tiffany Hunt will be working with Marian and myself in extension, and Brendan Montafia will be working full time while studying agronomy at university. This trainee agronomist position is being offered to encourage young people to get involved in agriculture and the local Burdekin sugar industry. Practical training in BPS' pest, disease and approved seed operation will be provided, followed by involvement in field trials, extension and agronomy activities. Project funding opportunities have meant that BPS can offer these extra services at no extra cost to our members. BPS plans to deliver extension services to growers over the long term and will continue to provide support to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability.

I would like to thank all the staff and directors for their commitment and hard work over 2014, and look forward to assisting our members in 2015. All the best for the festive season, enjoy some time with your family and friends and hopefully the weather is kind to us!

Merry Christmas

Rob

..... & CHRIS HESP (BOARD CHAIRMAN)

To all our valued members and their families, I wish to extend a warm Christmas greeting. May you all enjoy a merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

The Burdekin district mills crushed in excess of 8 million tonnes of cane during the 2014 season, a pleasing result following a number of very disappointing years. This years crop was processed in a timely manner and at this early stage the 2015 crop looks to be off to a solid start. It would be beneficial to see further storm rain while the cane is at this early stage.

At BPS, we are excited with our new staffing arrangements and look forward to delivering excellent support to all of our members. There are several important projects on our books that are either Government or industry funded and this funding has enabled BPS to employ 2 more qualified agronomists and in 2015 we will engage our very first trainee agronomist as well. This added expertise will benefit growers in the medium to long term. Thanks to my fellow board members for supporting management and myself with this important development.

I truly believe that BPS will continue to offer its members 'value for money' services for years to come. The future is bright. Have a safe and enjoyable festive season.

Chris.

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