Burdekin Irrigation Discussion Paper

Improving Irrigation Efficiency was ranked as the number one issue in the 2019 SRA Burdekin Adoption Strategic Action Plan. To address this issue, SRA is preparing an irrigation plan to help Burdekin farmers improve irrigation efficiency and reduce energy costs to drive productivity and profitability.

They have prepared a Discussion Paper which summarises the important irrigation issues and explores the opportunities to improve and this paper is now open for comment.

The comments generated by this Discussion Paper will inform the content of the Lower Burdekin Irrigation Extension Action Plan, which is an industry focused opportunity to tackle the issue of Irrigation Efficiency. The Discussion Paper is available here and SRA would like as much grower feedback as possible by 18 May 2020. This is your chance to provide your opinion, ensure regional relevance and shape the direction of the 5 Year Industry Focussed plan. We would suggest you download the paper as it makes for interesting reading and SRA are calling for feedback regarding the paper and the following six questions:

**Discussion question 1.**

Is a Lower Burdekin cane crush of 9,000,000 tonnes annually and a farm average yield of 125t cane/ha driven by increased irrigation efficiency a 2025 goal supported by growers and industry?

**Discussion question 2.**

Are these irrigation Application Efficiency (AE) targets (page 11) for the BRIA (AE of 85%) and Delta (AE of 75%) too high and unrealistic?

**Discussion question 3.**

Over the next 5 years (to 2025) what percentage of farmers can we expect to have block by block water use numbers and pumping cost/ML figures at their fingertips?

**Discussion question 4.**

Is an Irrigation Extension Plan that focuses on reducing energy costs, water use and increasing productivity (sugar yield from improved irrigation) the right approach to get growers involved in a new irrigation improvement project in the Burdekin?

**Discussion question 5.**

Should Whole Farm Irrigation Redevelopment Plans become part of the culture of the Burdekin by 2025?

**Discussion question 6.**

From a grower perspective what kind of irrigation demonstrations or trials are needed to? E.g. optimised furrow irrigation on the different soil permeabilities, alternative irrigation systems, or maybe enabling technologies such as sensors and automation?

Please direct your responses to Gavan Lamb (Adoption Officer - Water Management) at SRA Brandon. Gavan welcomes your feedback and can be contacted either via mobile phone on 0436 937 555 or via email to glamb@sugarresearch.com.au
Steam trials to start soon

Work crews have started commissioning equipment at Wilmar’s Burdekin mills ahead of the 2020 crush, and steam trials are just around the corner.

Burdekin Regional Operations Manager said the first pre-season steam trials would take place at Inkerman Mill on 19 May – less than a fortnight away.

Steam trials are scheduled for Pioneer, Invicta and Kalamia mills in the week of 25 May.

Inkerman will be the first of Wilmar’s mills to begin the season, on 2 June, with the other three sites starting a week later.

Mr Turnbull said the pre-season steam trials were critical to ensuring a smooth start to the crush.

“Running steam through the factory enables us to check the pressure components and safety devices on mill boilers, commission key items of plant and rectify issues ahead of the season start,” Mr Turnbull said.

“For us, steam trials are an important, final step in our testing and commissioning process. To growers and the wider community, they’re a positive sign that the crush is about to get under way and the local economy is about to kick into another gear.”

Mr Turnbull said Wilmar was maintaining a strong level of investment in its Burdekin mills this year, despite less-than-buoyant world sugar prices and the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

“The company is spending close to $75 million on capital and maintenance across the four mills. It’s a significant investment that highlights Wilmar’s long-term commitment to the region,” he said.

Major maintenance season projects this year include a $3.8 million overhaul of the generator turbine at Invicta Mill to ensure its reliability. This generator unit supplies power to the site and is interconnected to the State’s power grid, to supply green energy to Queenslanders.

At Inkerman Mill, crews have installed a new secondary air system for the mill’s main boiler, at a cost of $2.6 million. The large sections of ducting were built by Wilmar trades on site at Inkerman and are in the final stages of fit-out before steam trials.

Pioneer Mill got a new $1 million juice tank and more than $900,000 was spent on a new intermediate carrier system, including the carrier, chain and drive units at Kalamia Mill. In the cane supply arena, the Scott and Jarvisfield locos have been completely rebuilt at a total cost of $3.4 million. The locos will haul cane to Invicta Mill this season with new engines, drive trains and cooling systems, as well as new cabins and a fresh coat of paint.
Test ban risks stranding sugarcane harvest

CANEGROWERS is urging a commonsense, pragmatic and risk-based approach to prevent Queensland sugarcane being stranded at the roadside because of the state’s blanket ban on all driver testing during the coronavirus pandemic.

CANEGROWERS is using every advocacy opportunity and putting forward suggestions which would mitigate the risk of any virus transmission in a bid to see a restart of in-vehicle driver testing as soon as possible ahead of the start of the harvest.

“The issue has been raised at meetings and letters have been written but we need the government to now step in and work with us to resolve this issue,” CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan said. “We have potentially hundreds of drivers needing testing in districts which rely on road transport to move cut cane from farms to either sugar mills or rail sidings.

“Among those affected is Queensland’s most productive growing district, the Burdekin, which grows around 25% of the state’s sugarcane crop. In this area alone, CANEGROWERS Burdekin representatives estimate that at least an additional (new) 60 heavy vehicle licenced drivers are needed, possibly more, to ensure work can start on time and that there is a pool of stand by drivers should an outbreak of COVID-19 in the region push qualified people into quarantine.”

A reduction in the number of drivers coming to Queensland from interstate and New Zealand while COVID-19 border restrictions are in place has opened up an opportunity for locals looking for work who are capable but lack the appropriate HR license.

“Hundreds of these skilled drivers are deployed every year and every year there is a need to upskill, train and licence new entrants to the role,” Mr Galligan said.

“People in the community who have lost other employment due to coronavirus restrictions are ready and able to work but need the relevant HR licence.”

CANEGROWERS has suggested to the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Queensland Health that the size of the vehicles involved mean that social distancing could be practiced in a way to protects both the candidate and the assessor and that, if needed, PPE could be worn.

“With agriculture considered to be an essential industry during the pandemic and the drivers important for a successful harvest, since early April we have raised the issue at government-industry meetings at which CANEGROWERS represents the sugarcane industry,” Mr Galligan said. "It's now time for a commonsense approach that meets industry needs while keeping people safe.”

Farm Economic Analysis Tool

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries have developed a new online tool that helps sugarcane growers to measure farm profitability and planning.

Farm Economic Analysis Tool (FEAT) is free for the Australian Sugarcane Industry and growers can sign up online at https://featonline.com.au.

FEAT streamlines data entry, allows growers to access regional scenarios and can be used on phones, tablets or computers.
Lower Burdekin Water annual shutdown

Lower Burdekin Water will commence its annual shutdown on the 8th June, to enable scheduled capital works and essential maintenance to occur.

LBW’s annual shutdown always coincides with Sunwater’s annual shutdown, as LBW relies on Sunwater releasing water from Clare Weir into the Burdekin River to enable pumping to occur from LBW pumpstations. Sunwater has advised water will not be available from the 8th June onwards, as they will be performing major maintenance at Clare Weir.

LBW’s annual shutdown will continue for 3 weeks from the 8th June until 29th June, and open water will be UNAVAILABLE to open water users (and Sunwater’s riparian customers) during this period. Please adapt your irrigation schedules accordingly.

Sheepstation Creek customers, Burdekin Shire Council are completely replacing the Sheepstation Creek and Fiveways Road crossing during LBW’s annual shutdown. Burdekin Shire Council estimates the works will be completed within our annual shutdown period, however this timeline may change due to circumstances outside LBW’s control.

Southern Divisions - open water users on Central, Mathers, Iyah and Fords Divisions; Construction will commence on McDowell’s Pipeline Renewal Stage 2 on 11th May, with an estimated completion date of 31st July. Open water supply will be disrupted during this period and LBW will endeavour to keep irrigators notified. Please note, there will be NO water supplied during the annual shutdown period to all diversions from 8th June to 28th June 2020.

If you have any questions concerning the annual shutdown please contact your Operations Manager.

Queensland Government utility bill relief credit

The Queensland Government utility bill relief credit of $500 for small to medium businesses that consume less than 100-thousand kilowatt hours annually and $200 for all households will now be coming through on your electricity accounts.

Please check that the correct rebate $500 not $200 is coming off your business accounts.

Farm safety calendar competition now open

Queensland primary school students are invited to submit drawings to illustrate a farm safety message and help promote the importance of farm safety to young Queenslanders and families in rural areas.

Twelve winning drawings will be published in the 2021 Farm safety calendar and the winning entrants will each receive a $250 voucher and $500 for their school.

Entries should be submitted on white paper, using the competition template from worksafe.qld.gov.au

Entries close 26 June 2020. Winners will be announced in September 2020, and the free calendar will be available from October 2020.
CANEGROWERS Queensland ... taking up the fight on all issues affecting cane farmers

Executive

- Catch-up with CEO of Milling Council to discuss trade strategy, sustainable sugar supply chain and social license to operate work.
- Working with QFF Management Committee to keep abreast of current operational issues.
- Engagement with Griffith University to discuss their sugar tax study.
- Presented at QFF’s Reef Agriculture Extension Work Placement Program Webinar-Graduation. New extension graduates have finalised their training and work placements, most of whom have been working within the sugar sector.
- The Chair and CEO met via video conference with the Chair and CEO of AgForce regarding their now announced sugar cane board.
- Agricultural Workforce Committee - Sugar Industry Roundtable with the Federal Government. The Government has established a National Agricultural Workforce Strategy, which will also consider the related services, logistics and processing industries. This strategy will position Australia’s agriculture industry to attract, retain and develop the future workforce it requires and identify where access to a migrant workforce will be necessary to meet the industry’s workforce needs. CANEGROWERS participated with other Australian supply chain organisations to provide feedback.

Water & Electricity

- CANEGROWERS met Minister Lynham with QFF’s Water and Energy Policy Committee (WEPC) Members for a direct discussion on the range of water and electricity pricing matters. The government is scheduled to respond to the QCA irrigation water price recommendations this week, Thursday 30 April.
- On electricity prices and the electricity-water price nexus, regulatory decisions are awaiting the AER network price decision on the Energy Queensland’s Ergon and Energex networks. The AER decision is expected mid-May and the QCA electricity price determination is due on 31 May.
- On water prices, it appears the treatment of dam safety and IGEM costs are still under consideration.
- While the government is putting pressure on SunWater to be as efficient as possible, it remains to be seen whether SunWater will be required to implement the QCA’s suggestions on ways to improve aspects of its cost management processes.
- Treatment of solar bonus scheme costs remains under consideration. No commitment was given to remove from electricity costs.
- While no decisions have been made, the Minister appeared sympathetic to a systematic review of irrigation schemes, starting with the schemes in Mackay.
- Paradise Dam – focussed on safety, Minister Lynham is determined to the lowering of the dam wall.

Sunset Review of the ACDC Regulation

- The ACDC Regulation, which sits under the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966, provides the framework for licensing of agricultural chemical application (aerial and ground distribution) in Queensland. The Government intends to maintain this framework but is proposing some minor changes. One of these is the removal of AHCPMG301 (Control Weeds) as a competency training unit required for chemical application licences. This would align Queensland with requirements in other jurisdictions and is part of a national harmonisation process for regulation of Agvet chemicals.

COVID-19

- Queensland Agricultural Coordination WHS and Workforce working groups combined meeting. The main issues were:
  - There was no further information in relation to road vehicle transport and what is defined as ‘close contact’.
  - There was no proposed change to the current Safe Food guidelines.
  - Communication around the process of investigation when there is a positive COVID-19 case was considered important for growers to understand. There was a view that the business was automatically closed which was incorrect and the need for closure or reduced workforce was in part dependant on the risk plan in place. This provides the need to have one.
  - The process of job matching i.e. through Job Finder and harvest time was being continually improved.
  - An updated directive with the requirements to allow for the employment of seasonal workers has been released. One of the main issues from this is that health plans become mandatory for most businesses employing seasonal workers unless they are only employing Queensland residents working near their home. The detail is still to be digested.
  - The Agricultural Coordinating Officers would assist with implementing the conditions of the new directive.

Trade

- The WTO Panel looking at India’s sugar subsidies has proposed a plan to move the dispute forward by the exchange of written submissions. Responding to India’s objection to the proposal, Australia has supported the Panel’s proposed approach. A decision on process is expected next week.
- The ASA Trade strategy continues to move forward with the baseline assumptions and modelling largely settled.
Growers can monitor QSL pool performance via the Price Pool Matrices published on the QSL website (www.qsl.com.au). This information is updated regularly and provides a sense of how the QSL-managed pools are performing over the current season.

### Crop Year Indicative Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indicative Price</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020 Season</td>
<td>364.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021 Season</td>
<td>382.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022 Season</td>
<td>392.45</td>
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</tbody>
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Calculation using ICE Closing Prices or equivalent Bank Swap Rates and prevailing AUD/USD exchange rates

Refer to [https://www.wilmarsugarmills.com.au](https://www.wilmarsugarmills.com.au) for additional Pricing Information and trends

### Estimated Wilmar 2019 Pool Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pool Type</th>
<th>Net pool price ($/Tonne IPS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilmar Production Risk Pool</td>
<td>$429</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilmar Managed Pool ¹</td>
<td>$415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmar US Quota Pool</td>
<td>$711</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Gross Pool Prices are an estimate based on the tonnes hedged and current market price (as at the last business day of the month) for unhedged tonnage. Allocation Account Amounts begin the season as estimates and are reviewed and updated on a monthly basis as actual premiums and costs are known.

1. Wilmar has contributed economic interest sugar from its farms to this pool, to provide added tonnage. Wilmar economic interest sugar in this pool will receive the same price as growers. The pool is priced on a 1:2:2:1 basis.

The monthly pool price report is available on the Wilmar grower web

### Estimated QSL 2019 Pool Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pool Type</th>
<th>Net pool price ($/Tonne IPS)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QSL Harvest Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSL Actively Managed Pool</td>
<td>$390</td>
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<td>QSL Early Start Actively Managed Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSL Guaranteed Floor Pool</td>
<td>$386</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSL US Quota Pool</td>
<td>$602</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSL 2-season Forward Pool</td>
<td>$388</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Growers can monitor QSL pool performance via the Price Pool Matrices published on the QSL website (www.qsl.com.au). This information is updated regularly and provides a sense of how the QSL-managed pools are performing over the current season.
1. This week the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance is celebrating the fruits of those working in Queensland’s diverse agricultural industries’ labour! Check out this VIDEO about the many and varied career opportunities offered by the agriculture sector and how far they can take you.

2. With the drought breaking in some areas of the country, more rural properties are being placed on the market following improving conditions and sale prices. Unfortunately, with the current COVID-19 restrictions, it is not an easy time for buyers looking to purchase property. More from QFF corporate partner Holding Redlich HERE.

3. At a time when farmers are facing ongoing challenges, they require unified agricultural representation more than ever and at this time we must all be pulling the same direction to ensure a bright future for Queensland agriculture. Read QFF’s Queensland Country Life column HERE.

4. Growers can face the 2020 sugarcane season with confidence to minimise the spread of COVID-19 given the hours of work by their CANEGROWERS staff and elected representatives. Read the media statement HERE.

5. Now is the time to remind Australia that food is our first medicine! QFF industry member Growcom is encouraging growers to share Eat Yourself To Health COVID Cooking Challenges involving fresh produce their members have recently harvested. Growcom Chair Belinda Adams has a special challenge involving fresh basil HERE.

6. New measures to help agribusiness and commercial fisheries access seasonal workers during the COVID-19 pandemic are now in effect. These changes ensure seasonal work can continue so Queensland’s food supplies are secure while meeting COVID-19 public health directions. Details HERE.

7. In response to the impact of COVID-19, farmers won’t have to pay state land rent for six months. Lessees don’t have to apply and those who have already paid their rent for 1 April to 30 June 2020 will receive a refund or if requested, a credit. Details HERE.

8. You are invited to have your say on proposed changes to the Fitzroy Basin water plan to allow for new water allocations and trading opportunities in the Rookwood Weir region. Consultation is open until 5pm, 12 June 2020. For more information, click HERE.

9. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency is seeking input from stakeholders in Australia’s bioenergy sector to underpin the development of the Bioenergy Roadmap. The Bioenergy Roadmap will help to inform the next series of investment and policy decisions in the bioenergy sector in Australia. Have your say HERE.

10. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is holding free drought planning and recovery webinars on the 6th, 8th and 11th of May to assist small landholders by providing best practice advice about feeding livestock in a drought and making decisions about their future. Register HERE.

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Smartcane BMP self-assessment workshops

The self-assessment is the first step towards BMP accreditation. Growers who have completed the self-assessment and would like to continue on to accreditation should also contact Terry or Jasmine.

Terry Granshaw - 0437 553 149
Jasmine Connolly - 0438 934 601

IrrigWeb workshops

Workshops will cover: setting up a farm and paddocks; determining the irrigation point; and entering irrigation information.

You will need an internet capable laptop or tablet. Phones are suitable for recording irrigation events but their screens are too small for the initial setup. If you don’t have a laptop or tablet please let us know so we can organise one.

Please RSVP to Marian Davis - 0428 927 079.
canenews is read by the majority of Burdekin cane farmers and their families in the Burdekin. Copies are also circulated to all CANEGROWERS Offices, businesses, industry, politicians, Government Agencies and members of the community.

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ABN: 43 114 632 325
Postal Address: PO Box 933, AYR QLD 4807
Telephone: (07) 4790 3600
Facsimile: (07) 4783 4914
Email: bdk@canegrowers.com.au

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- Fertilizer Spreading
- Pulverized Lime &
- Rock Phosphate
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Fax: 4782 1038
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