2018 Crop and Season Outlook

The crop is looking healthy and vigorous in places but unfortunately there are areas that are not looking that great. The reasons for this are numerous, but a very wet October 2017 followed by a wet and cooler than average November resulted in poor ratoon growth and weak plant crops. The late summer and autumn conditions have improved the state of the crop considerably but the estimate is still down on previous years at 510,000 tonnes.

The current seasonal outlook is for near normal conditions initially, but then becoming drier than normal towards the end of the year. There is a good chance of the development of isolated east coast low systems in the short term. Let us hope that these do not occur.

Shed Meetings
There are two pre-season shed meetings coming up on Wednesday 6 June 2017. The first will be at 8.30am at Cedars Shed, Kynnumboon, followed by the second at 11.00am at Grippo's shed, Wulffs lane, Nunderi. Chris Connors and Greg Petersen will talk about industry and milling matters, Johan will cover the cane supply arrangements, and I will touch on some agricultural topics.

Mill Mud and Ash
Notices regarding the distribution of mill mud and ash for the coming season have been sent out and if you have not received one, please contact us. An order form is attached to the notice, so get yours in early. By doing so you will avoid disappointment and frustration when the mud truck goes past your farm on the way to someone else who got their order in before you.

Soybean Harvest
The soybean harvest is in full swing and it must be a relief to be able to harvest a crop after last year's wipe out. Yields are generally lower than average for the district but given the conditions at planting they are satisfactory. The good prices being received for the beans are helping to make up for the lower yields.
Ag Services Strategic Plan

Ag Services recently conducted a review of the strategic plan. Around 30 farmers from all areas had a hand in reviewing the current situation and then providing guidance on the direction and activities for Ag. Services over the next 5 years. A plan has been developed with programs looking at yield improvement, RSD, weed control, varieties, crop nutrition, drainage, and harvesting. The Plan can be downloaded from the Sunshine Sugar website, and if you have any comments or suggestions, the Ag. Advisory committee would welcome the feedback.

Harvesting Forum

SRA hosted a harvesting forum recently which was well attended by growers and harvesting crews. Unfortunately, it did not deliver on the expectations of those who attended and this is regrettable. The plan going forward is for SRA to conduct two trials in the Condong area this season in collaboration with two harvesting groups. The exact nature and plan for the trials will be decided after consultation with the groups involved. If anyone is interested in being involved in this work please contact us.

Bonsucro Audit

The annual audit was brought forward to May this year on request from the growers. Six farms were audited and all the growers survived unscathed. Congratulations to the first timers, Peter Baker, Justin Brinsmead, Alan Partridge, and Nick Reeve. Kevin Twohill and Dave Bartlett are experienced campaigners and hardly raised a sweat. Thank you all for your co-operation, it is sincerely appreciated.

Acid Sulfate Soil Compliance Records

The Acid Sulfate Soil (ASS) audit is coming up in June/July and in preparation for this, all growers are required to complete a Compliance Record form which is attached. It will take you 15 minutes to complete the form, and if done now, while the operations are still fresh in your memory, should be relatively painless.

RSD Inspections

A notice went out recently calling for bookings for RSD inspections. This is just a reminder to get your booking in early to avoid missing out. It also makes planning and scheduling a lot easier. If you are coming past the office but don't have your form with you, there is a pile of them as you walk in the back door.

Last word

We look forward to working with you all, and may it be a successful and productive season ahead for all of us.

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