

Notes from the AAC meeting held on Monday 04 December 2023

Matters Arising

- The Grower planting loan scheme proposal was not supported by the Board.
- The Capital replacement plan for Ag Services
 - Base Station replacement accepted.
 - Hwd Harvester replacement – postponed to next financial year.

3. Ag Services - Projects

- **Increasing the proportion of 1YO cane harvested.**
 - The consultant is working on the model and plans to have a working version by mid-January 2024.
- **Cane loss monitors**
 - The demonstration of the units on the Central & Kintail machines made growers and crews aware of:
 - The need to “top” the cane.
 - The effect of time of day on harvest losses.
 - The plan is to continue with the project in the coming season.
 - There is still scepticism regarding the magnitude of the reported losses.
- **Variety Demonstration trial - Hwd.**
 - Planting of the trial was delayed by wet weather but has now been planted.

4. Flood Recovery

- It was reported that large areas remained unplanted at Broadwater.
 - The extent of the area that remains unplanted will be known once the maps have been returned and processed.

5. Extension Officer – Broadwater

- Darran Boote has accepted the position and the necessary visas have been obtained, with an April start date planned.

6. Broadwater ASP and motherplot

- Haruko’s Farm at Pimlico will be used for the seed plot from 2024.
- 4 ha of motherplot has been established at Haruko’s, with the ASP to be established in 2024 on the same property.

7. General Business

Season Summary

Mill	Age	Tonnes	T/Ha	CCS	T.CCS/Ha
CONDONG	1	260,445	94.2	12.1	11.4
	2	138,692	103.6	12.3	12.8
CONDONG Total		399,138	97.2	12.2	11.8
BROADWATER	1	45,402	57.2	12.5	7.2
	2	261,929	84.6	13.1	11.1
	3	931	46.4	12.9	6.0
BROADWATER Total		308,262	78.9	13.0	10.2
HARWOOD	1	54,983	73.4	12.7	9.3
	2	350,416	105.0	13.2	13.9

	3	355	63.8	12.3	7.8
HARWOOD Total		405,754	99.1	13.1	13.0
NSW Total		1,113,154	91.9	12.8	11.7

- Generally poor yields, with higher than average CCS.
- Predictions for 2024 – should be better at Condong and Harwood but Broadwater will be down due to lack of area planted.

ASP Seed Distribution

- The respective ASP reports were presented.

TONNES			
Harwood	Broadwater	Condong	Total
980	520	560	2060

- More cane should be planted into the seed plots at Broadwater.
- Growers are using the seed plots as a source of commercial seedcane, and placing large orders, which is not what the seed plots were intended for.
- The quality of the billets at Broadwater and Harwood was good.

SRA Varieties “performance”

- Concern was expressed over the performance and ratoonability of the “SRA” varieties released so far in NSW.
- It was agreed that SRA be informed of these concerns and that a meeting with the Variety selection committee and SRA be scheduled for early 2024 to discuss the variety selection process and the performance of the varieties in general.

Impact of Harvesting on crop ratoons.

- The discussions around the SRA varieties led to discussion as to what other factors affected ratoonability and overall crop yields.
- Harvesting BMP was agreed to be a major contributing factor to the overall decline in productivity.
- Not using GPS guidance in harvesters and haul-outs in particular was a problem.
- Several other factors and possible improvements to harvesters that would improve performance were tabled and discussed and should form part of proposed harvesting forum for discussion.
- In order for the Harvesting sector to get the message that they have to improve their performance, the growers would have to be the driving force.
- It was agreed that a letter be tabled to Canegrowers, explaining the problem and asking for their involvement in finding a solution.

Cane Land Retention

- It was suggested that the issue be addressed by having Ag Services staff actively canvassing the farming community in the Broadwater-Casino area, encouraging them to plant cane.
- This suggestion was not supported by the whole committee.

- In order to do the above effectively, it would have to be followed up with a contracting service to get the development work done.
- This would be a matter for MHS to consider as a major capital and staff investment would be required.
- No conclusion or resolution was forthcoming as more discussion on this topic is required.

Fire Ants – Murwillumbah

A brief summary of the current situation was provided.

- There is little or no direct impact on cane growing at the moment.
- Tractors and equipment have to be cleaned and free of potential fire ant carrying material, before leaving the 5 km radius restricted movement area.

SRA Research – Energy Canes

- The meeting was briefed on the plans to conduct trials on possible “energy canes” by SRA in the future.
- Some of these trials might be in NSW.

The meeting was closed at 12.04 pm.

Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 4 February 2024