

## Notes of the AAC Meeting held on Tuesday 6 February 2024

### ATTENDEES:

Kevin Twohill (Chair), Malcolm Warren, David Bartlett, Ian McBean, Peter Castle, Milton Lewis, Tom Walsh, Dean Murphy, Alister Smith.

### Business Arising

- **GPS Base Station Upgrades**

Capital has been approved (\$30K) to replace 2 GPS receivers (MS750) at Base 6 (Coraki) and Base 11 (North Clarence).

### Ag Services

#### Increasing 1YO harvest volumes Project

- The model developed to date was briefly demonstrated and the principals of how it would work and be used was discussed. It was suggested that once the model was finalised it should be trialled with the AAC members first, to test the functionality.

#### Variety & Farming System (Mound Planting)

- The late planting was unfortunate, but circumstances prevented earlier planting.
- Due to the sandy soil, the mounds have collapsed and will be reformed after cultivation is complete. The trial might be repeated in the coming season.

#### Extension Officer - Broadwater

- Darren Boote is due to arrive early April and begin work in mid-April. He has a background in Agricultural Engineering and experience in the sugar industry in Africa.

#### Canegrowers & AAC meeting

- A meeting was held to clarify the respective roles of Ag Services and Canegrowers.
- Canegrowers were of the opinion that Ag Services was not providing an adequate service to growers.
- It was agreed that a commitment to work together and improve communications was required by both parties, through field days, shed meetings and newsletters, organised by Ag Services.

#### Strategic Plan Review

- The Ag Services Strategic Plan is due for review. It was agreed that an Ag Seminar be held with a session focussed on the strategic direction of Ag Services going forward.
- Once the Strategic plan has been reviewed and agreed, a Work Plan will be developed for the next 3 years.

#### Financial Report

- The financial summary was discussed, and the larger expense items explained to the committee.
- An adjustment to the Ag Services levy was required as of the coming season. It was agreed that this would be increased from 15c/T to 18c/T.

### General Business

#### USQ Richmond River Water quality report

- A summary of this report was presented and discussed.
- It was agreed that reacting to the report and challenging the findings would not achieve anything.
- Time and efforts should rather be focussed on positive actions to improve the quality of water coming of the cane areas, ensuring compliance with current regulations. i.e., following label instructions, only using registered chemicals, and accurate recording of spray activities.
- It was agreed that a water quality monitoring program be re-instated with funding from SRA or government.
- It was agreed that Ag Services would continue to participate in forums aimed at improving the water quality of the Richmond River.

#### Buffer Zones – Chemical Applications

- The adherence to buffer zones as stipulated on herbicide label instructions was discussed.
- It was agreed that the need to be aware of these regulations and how best to achieve compliance should be communicated again to growers via newsletters and shed meetings.

- The Weed Guide publication to include a table on buffer zones for the most common herbicides.
- The Spray Diaries issued by Ag Services to be updated to include additional columns to enable the recording of compliance with the buffer zone requirements of the chemicals being used.

### **LLS – Pig Control – Harwood**

- It was agreed that the sugar industry should be involved and assist LLS where possible with the pig control program.

### **Broadwater Yield Decline**

- Further research and discussion on the topic has indicated a possible link to varieties available at the time. (High yield – low sugar (BN varieties) changed to low yield-high sugar varieties?)
- A move to wider row spacing and focus on controlled traffic could assist in curbing the declining yield trend. The on-going resistance to changing to wider rows, based on the expense of refitment will be the subject of a local bus trip later in the season.

### **Bus Trip Destinations**

- Possible venues/subjects for local bus trips in the next few months are:
  - Real costs involved in moving to a wider row spacing.
  - Zonal liming
  - Compaction in different row configurations
  - Look at commercial SRW30 and SRA29

### **Fire Ants**

- The impact of fire ant quarantine zones on cane haulage and harvesting processes at Condong and Broadwater needs to be determined.
- Ag Services and Cane Supply will look into the situation.

### **Broadwater ASP output**

- The possibility of increasing the tonnage of seed produced from the Broadwater ASP was discussed, as there are a number of factors to consider, e.g., Land availability, transport, costs, and manpower. The fundamental purpose of the ASP must also be considered. Is it a nursery seed source or a commercial seed source?

### **AAC member nominations**

- Peter Castle gave notice that he will not be standing for nomination for another term on the committee. AAC members were asked to remind their respective Canegrower organisations to call for nominations and hold elections for the AAC members before the June meeting.