NEWSLETTER

December 2025

VICKI'S FAREWELL

Congratulations to Vicki Royal on achieving 25 years of service at MAPS. As our one and only trusted Administration Officer MAPS is very lucky to have Vicki working hard behind the scenes ensuring everything runs smoothly. From general admin to posting samples, sending grower notifications, managing staff and everything else in between, Vicki has been a huge asset to MAPS over the past 25 years.

So many things would not have been possible without Vicki's help. It comes with great sadness that Vicki announces her retirement at the end of the year. From the MAPS team we thank you for your commitment over the past 25 years and wish you all the best for your future endeavours, we will be lost without you.

As the year draws to a close,

on behalf of staff and the Board,

MAPS wishes you a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

Our office will be closed from 4pm Tuesday, 23rd December and will

re-open Monday 5th January 2026.

OBSERVATION PLOTS

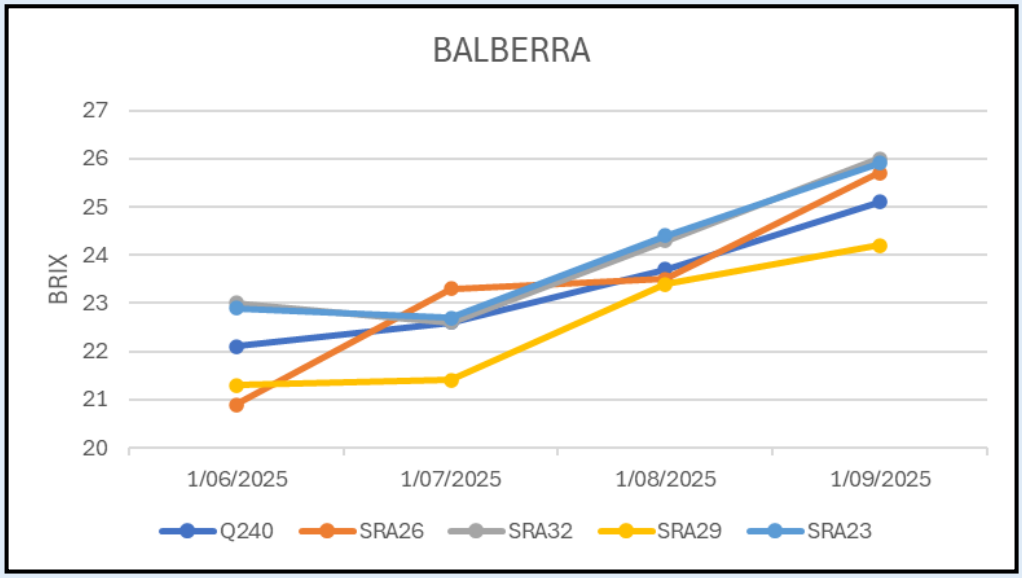
MAPS Observation Plots have been planted again this year. We have 6 sites across the region on different soil types with WSRA17, QC11-915, SRA28, Q240 (standard), SRA23 and SRA29 being the varieties to assess for next year. Observation plots were established more than 10 years ago now and have provided valuable information on varieties with regards to diseases such as chlorotic streak, smut and rust, and also have provided commercial data on the newly released and up and coming varieties. These observation plots also provide an opportunity for others to learn what is in the 'pipeline' through grower shed meetings and field walks .

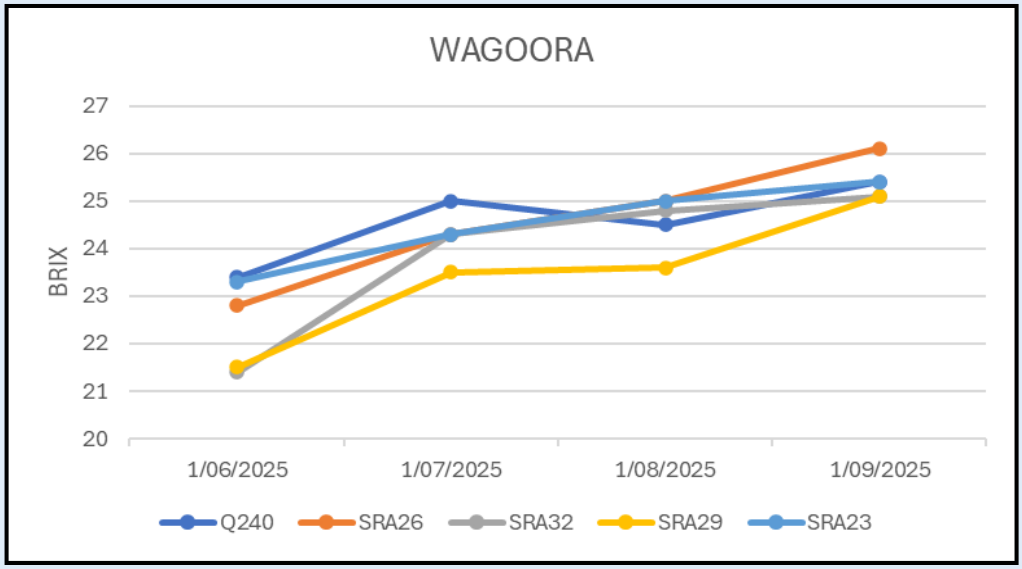
Maturity Sampling is conducted on these plots to show the individual variety sugar curve and trends in plant cane as they are tested across 4 or so months. In ratoons we keep an eye out for different traits of the varieties such as ratoonability.

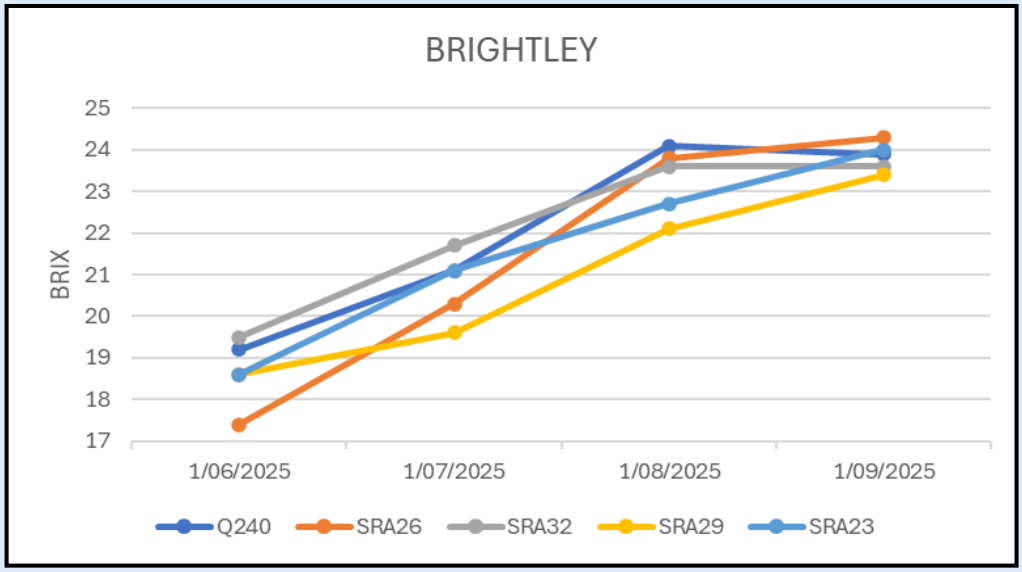
This year's data from our plots are shown in the graphs on the next page. MAPS staff cut and bundle the varieties so that SRA can analyse them through their small mill machine. Our first sample was processed on the 11th of June and was repeated every month until September. We had 6 different sites with all sites having Q240 (standard), SRA26, SRA32, SRA29 and SRA23. Farleigh, Habana and Victoria Plains also had SRA28 and seedling QC11-915.

The data we get from these plots wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the support of the plot holders who kindly volunteer their time and ground for this research to be done. A big thank you goes to our plot holders: Ross Windsor, Geoff and Nic Hall, Andrew Vassallo, Steve and Sam Schembri, Andrew Sherry, Michael Sherry and Barry and Stuart Volker.

Maturity Sampling Data







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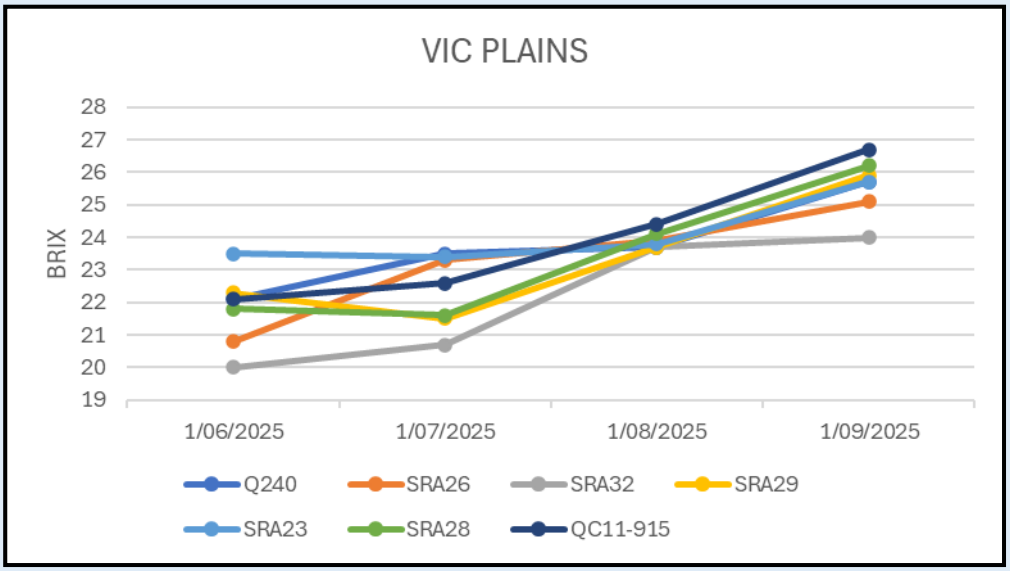
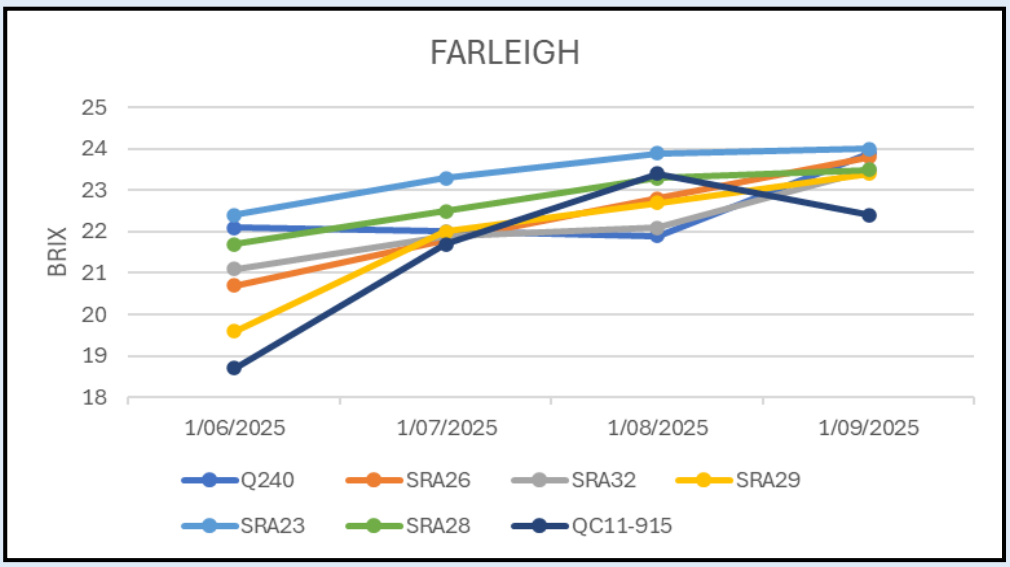
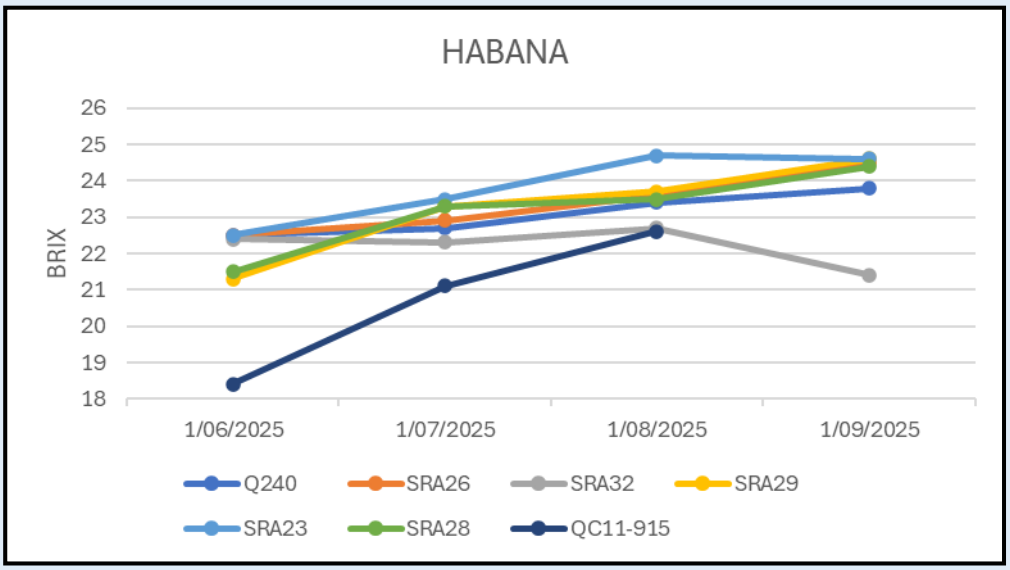






SMARTCANE BMP UPDATE

Scrutiny of Australian Sugar is now a constant in the environment which all levels of the industry operate within. The gains of the Smartcane BMP programme over the past two decades are an effective response by industry to the various issues raised by outside agencies. Smartcane BMP now provides a strong leadership position for the cane industry on environmental stewardship. This is a result of individual growers taking the steps within their own business.

So, a summary of the gains to date are worth keeping close to hand. The statistics from the Smartcane BMP website are:

- 1,911 enterprises benchmarked with 801 of these enterprises being fully BMP accredited.
- 321,183 ha of cane land are benchmarked with 173,890 ha of this managed at Industry standard verified via Smartcane BMP accreditation.

It varies from district to district with some districts showing a low uptake of Smartcane BMP to the northern districts with about 90% of cane area BMP accredited. This reflects how each district has its own unique characteristics and also reflects the leadership displayed on boards and committees.

Although the Mackay region only has 36% of cane farm area under BMP accreditation, 1 in 4 cane businesses are accredited and Mackay has the highest total number of businesses involved in Smartcane BMP statewide. MAPS delivered support to the highest number of Smartcane BMP re-accreditations statewide in 2025. Support for new growers has been hampered by the re-accreditation load on the BMP Facilitators.

BMP Facilitator's Workshop 2025

Several recent changes have been made to enable MAPS to respond to this high level of grower interest in the programme:

- QCGO have increased funding to MAPS to provide more facilitators' time to assist growers to collate the evidence required for the auditor.
- QCGO have appointed an additional auditor in the Central region to ensure audit.
- Funding for the programme as a whole has in principle support from state and federal governments to go beyond mid-2026. A 3 month extension has been confirmed to ensure funding is continued to Sept 2026 while the next stage of the program is finalised for 2026-2031.
- The managerial role in Canegrowers based in Brisbane has been filled by Lindsey Perry who will grow the Smartcane BMP programme to offer *Module 4: People & Business* which covers additional criteria required by global sustainability standards. Sustainable finance opportunities are also being investigated, with the goal of providing Smartcane BMP accredited growers universally better interest rates.

Smartcane BMP is one of only 2 industry programs to be a recognised industry led program under Reef Regulations. Growers who are BMP accredited and continue to apply the standards become a lower priority for several state government departments as they administer their compliance programmes. Those growers who voluntarily provide permission to share accreditation status with DETSI don't receive a compliance call at all.

Other benefits to growers to be BMP accredited include meeting various criteria in grant applications, incentive programmes and industry initiatives. Basically a few less 'hoops' to jump through if you are BMP accredited.

As a Mackay grower, to take advantage of positive developments in the Smartcane BMP programme and broaden its impact in the Sugar Industry, contact your BMP facilitator Lorelle Flynn on 0448 715 482 OR your Productivity Officer.

Early Finish? Let's take advantage of legumes over the summer fallow period

With the potential for an earlier finish to the crush this season, its now time to think about how we are going to manage your fallow paddocks. One thing to consider is whether there are any issues in the paddock that need to be addressed. It may be problem weeds, poor drainage or a noted decrease in productivity due to soil constraints.

Once these have been addressed, a great way to make further soil health improvements is by planting a break crop over the summer months which will greatly benefit the next season's plant crop.

There are several break crop options available to growers and all can be planted with the MAPS zero tillage legume planter.

The MAPS planter is available to growers to plant a variety of legumes, such as soybean, cowpea and sunn hemp, into either worked or unworked ground. To find out more about planting a legume crop to start improving your soil health and productivity, please contact your Productivity Officer.

Sunn hemp crop established in mid-September 2025 near Racecourse

RSD Detection at the Mill

Ratoon stunting disease (RSD) is known as a major disease to our industry which can cause significant reductions to productivity and profitability. If left undetected, RSD can spread quickly and is a disease you don't want in your crop eating away at your profits. Detection is typically limited to testing plant material which is a lengthy and costly process to identify and confirm RSD. The first step in managing the disease is knowing where it is, which is why MAPS has conducted RSD surveys for last eight years.

RSD surveys are also time consuming and costly but is a way of ground proofing the regions low levels of RSD. Traditionally MAPS staff have taken a proactive approach and sampled ratoon blocks for the presence of RSD and once the disease is found, management plans can be put in place.

In collaboration with Mackay Sugar, MAPS are trialling a project collecting juice samples from Marian mill for RSD detection. Samples are collected in the juice lab and are barcoded for traceability and will be analysed using the qPCR method. SRA Pathologist, Seona Casonato, will analyse the samples to determine the RSD status of the samples. This year the project is being trialled at Marian mill with a plan to extend the project to both Farleigh and Racecourse mill to collect more samples across all the Mackay Sugar region.

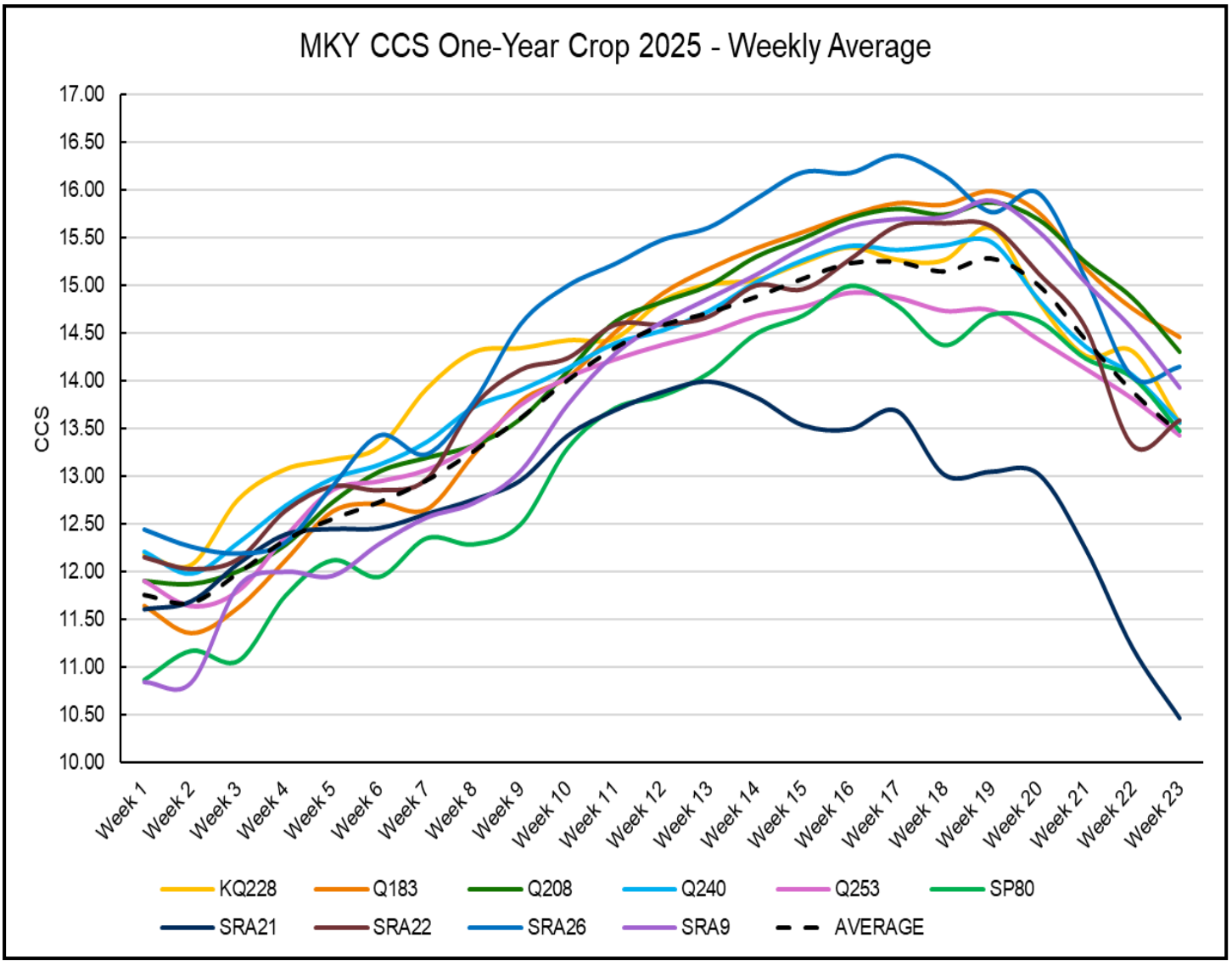
RSD sampling commercial crops will allow for a greater understanding of the disease across our industry. To date, the on-farm surveys that MAPS staff have conducted are continually indicating our low levels of RSD. The mill sampling is a new approach in RSD detection and allows MAPS and growers to implement processes to manage the disease and restrict any potential yield losses.

Keeping an Eye on Sugar

At the start of the crush, one of the main unknowns is which varieties will deliver the best CCS. The graph below shows, for the season to date, the CCS levels of the prominent varieties supplied to Mackay Sugar.

While varieties like Q240, Q208R, Q183 and KQ228 generally perform well over the milling season, the newer options like Q253 and SRA 9 compare well against the older varieties for most of the season. Q253 is better suited as a mid-option, while SRA 9 is more mid to late. This information will vary from season to season, and while the local milling zone's curves will differ to a Mackay regional curve (below), this is a great starting point for how to schedule your harvest program.

This year just over 60 thousand tonnes of SRA26 has been sent through the mill (season to date), providing adequate commercial data on the new variety. As seen in the graph below SRA26 performed well keeping on par with the older varieties, testing 0.3 to 0.7 units of CCS above the other varieties from week 10 to 18. It is important to remember, while commercial data of SRA26 has been collected, the amount sent to the mill is significantly lower than the dominant varieties. The accuracy and reliability of the data is subject to consignment data.



Sugarcane varieties perform differently according to the season, soil type, agronomic practices and timing of harvest. Understanding CCS curves and how varieties perform throughout the season can help effective harvest management and overall profitability. The graph above illustrates how the timing of harvest impacts CCS. Taking the time to accurately record variety consignments is vital to provide precise data for determining each variety's sugar curve and making more informed decisions.

This information is derived from all milling consignments (NordZucker and Mackay Sugar Limited) over the 2025 season, with CCS averaged for each milling week by variety. The average figure graphed is the average of the dominant varieties, not the mill weekly average CCS. All figures exclude standover.

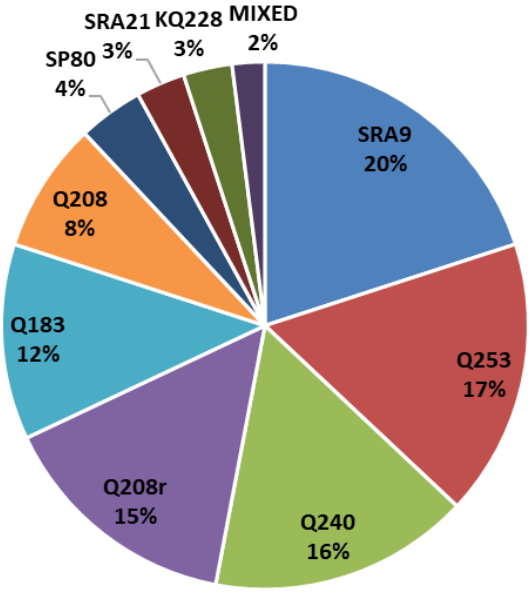
Variety Selection

One of the best methods of enhancing productivity on the farm is through variety selection. One of the best sources of variety information is your local Productivity Officer. Your local Productivity Officer has a range of variety information that comes from a number of sources including the MAPS Observation Plots that are spread throughout the region. The data collected from these plots forms the basis of variety advice including variety performance across the different soil types and information that helps to answer questions such as what varieties are suitable for heavier soils, lighter soils, wet paddocks, dry paddocks, ridges, creek flats etc, and if the variety is tolerant to some of the soil issues that we have in the region such as sodicity.

Advice can also be provided around optimal variety harvesting times, pest and disease issues, what varieties are resistant to Pachymetra, and if you need to take a sample before planting to assess the spore level in the soil. Information available also includes disease issues to be aware of for different varieties such as Chlorotic Streak Disease etc.

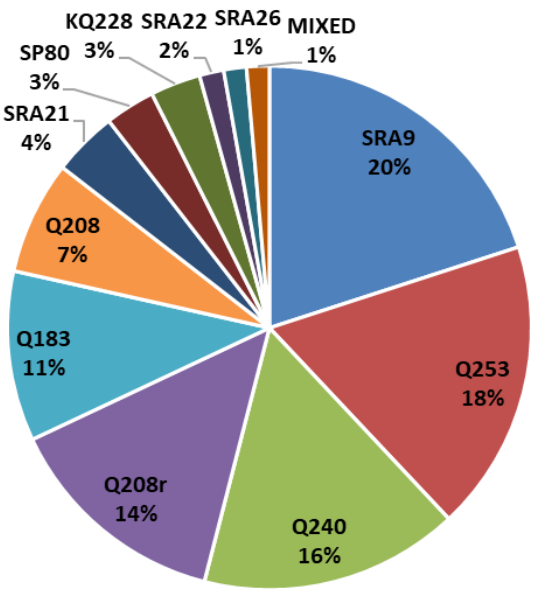
Having a conversation with your Productivity Officer about varieties and how to get the most out of them can really help with making the right variety selection decisions on your farm.

2024 Season Top 10 Varieties (95% of the crop)



In the above graph are the top 10 varieties that made up 95% of the crop in the 2024 Season.

2025 SEASON TONNES*



* As at 04/12/25 the tonnes in the above graph represent 97.3% of the 4.53 million tonnes that have been processed so far.

Diuron use in Sugarcane

Application of herbicide products containing Diuron for use in Sugarcane –

Mackay/Whitsunday

For the Mackay region, there are a number of Diuron products that have commenced a closed spray window period for use from **1 December to 30 April.** In the case of products such as Bobcat combi WG a closed spray window runs from **1 November to 31 May.** These closed spray windows are approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), who are the Australian Government statutory agency responsible for the registration of all agricultural chemical products and approval of their labels in Australia.

What is a closed spray window?

Closed spray windows, also referred to as no-spray windows, are applied to certain chemicals where it has been deemed necessary to restrict the application of that chemical during certain times of the year. This may be due to the climatic weather conditions like minimum rainfall that reduces the dilution factors of runoff waters, or excess rainfall which can lead to increased loss of products, and impact on product efficacy.

Are other chemicals effected by close spray windows?

Yes. Apart from Diuron there are a number of chemicals that are subject to **closed spray windows in the Mackay** district such as **Imidacloprid and 2,4-D products** used in plant cane and ratoons. These may vary across different brands and products, so it is critical to check the label of the product that you are using.

When deciding on the use of herbicides or insecticides including Diuron, 2,4-D, and Imidacloprid products, it is **strongly recommended** that you refer to the label

attached to the product you are using to identify when you can apply that product. You can review a range of different products and brand labels from the APVMA chemical database by searching “APVMA database” which will guide you as to when that product can be used, as well as other conditions of use.

Label reading tips

When reading your diuron containing product label, always review the product label carefully, especially under the following sections:

- RESTRAINTS
- DIRETIONS FOR USE
- CRITICAL COMMENTS

Look for statements such as “DO NOT apply in the Mackay / Whitsunday” to ensure compliance with usage restrictions.

#These dates may vary based on product brand. Read and follow label for individual products.

Example: **Product A:** Mackay / Whitsunday closed spray window period

CROP	WEED CONTROLLED	STATE	RATE /ha	Critical Comments
Sugarcane	Weed seedlings of Amaranthus spp., Awnless Barnyard Grass, Barnyard Grass,Bluetop (Billygoat Weed), Coast Button Grass, Cobbler's Pegs, Common Sida, Crowsfoot Grass, Green Summer grass, Guinea grass, Phyllanthus, Pigweed, Summer Grass, Rattle pod, Setaria spp.,Square Weed, Summer Grass, Thickhead	QLD, NSW only	4 kg	**Ratoon cane (after harvesting):** **DO NOT apply in the Wet Tropics.** **DO NOT apply in the Burdekin between 1 December and 29 February** **DO NOT apply in Mackay/Whitsunday between 1November and 31 May.** **DO NOT apply in Mary-Burnett between 1 November and 31 May.** **DO NOT apply in NSW between 1 November and 30 April.** Apply after harvest and before crop and weed emergence. If applying as a band treatment avoid throwing excessive untreated soil onto the treated bane when inter -row cultivating. DO NOT apply more than 4 kg/ha during the season.
	Weeds as above and including: Bellvine, Common Morning Glory, Cupid's Flower (Star-of-Bethlehem), of 60% of the crop area. Common Sensitive Plant, Passion Fruit Vine, Pink convolvulus, Red convolvulus		3-4 kg	**Ratoon and plant cane (Post emergent):** **Apply ONLY as a directed band spray over a maximum of 60% of the crop area.** **DO NOT apply in the Wet Tropics.** **DO NOT apply in the Burdekin between 1 January and 29 February.** **DO NOT apply in Mackay/Whitsunday between 1 November and 31 May.** **DO NOT apply in Mary-Burnett between 1 November and 29 February.** **DO NOT apply in NSW between 1 November and 31 March.** Apply as directed spray, full width between rows or as a band treatment at last cultivation or close-in to weed free surface. If emerged annual weeds (15 cm or less in height) are present ensure thorough spray coverage is achieved. Use as a directed spray to minimise spray contact with cane plant as injury to cane may result. DO NOT use any more than 4 kg/ha during the season. Treated areas may be replanted to sugar cane one year after last application. DO NOT treat at out-of-hand stage, ratoon blocks that are to be replanted soon after harvest. Some Itch Grass plants germinating from a depth unprotected by the chemical may not be controlled.
	Giant Sensitive Plant, Itch Grass, Wild Rose, Centro, Pink Burr, Stinking Passion Flower	QLD only		

Product B: Can be used anytime in Mackay / Whitsunday

CROP	WEED CONTROLLED	Weed growth	STATE	RATE/ha	Critical Comments
Sugarcane	Amaranthus spp.,Arsenic Weed, Awnless Barnyard Grass, Barnyard Grass, Bluetop (Billygoat Weed), Coast Button Grass, Cobbler's Pegs, Common Morning-glory, Common Sensitive Plant, Common Sida, Crowsfoot Grass, Cupid's Flower (Star-of- Bethlehem), Giant Sensitive Plant, Green Summer Grass, Guinea Grass, Itch Grass, Milkweed, Passion Fruit Vine, Phyllanthus, Pigweed, Pink Burr, Red Convolvulus, Pink Convolvulus, Rattlepod Summer Grass, Rattle pod, Red Convolvulus, Setaria, spp., Siratro, Square Weed, Stinking Herbicide Passion Flower, Summer Grass, Thickhead, Wild Rose.	Up to 5 cm high	QLD, NSW, WA, NT only	530 g plus 1.2 to1.6L Paraquat mixture	Apply only as directed spray on plant and ratoon cane using an Irvine spray boom (or similar equipment). Complete spray coverage on the weed is essential. For weeds, up to 5 cm high use a minimum spray volume of 250 L/ha.
		Up to 10cm high		900 g plus plus 1.2 to1.6L Paraquat mixture	For weeds up to 10cm high use a minimum spray rate volume of 350L/ha . Use the higher rate of Paraquat for dense and more mature weeds. Always add BS 1000 at 100 mL/100L of final spray volume (0.1% volume/volume).

NOT TO BE USED FOR ANY PURPOSE, OR IN ANY MANNER, CONTRARY TO THIS LABEL UNLESS AUTHORISED UNDER APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION.

For more information regarding chemical use, search for “using agricultural chemicals” at business.qld.gov.au, scan the QR code or contact your Local Department of Primary Industries on 13 25 23.

The Enhanced Managing Pesticide Risks in Great Barrier Reef Catchments project is funded through the Queensland Government’s Queensland Reef Water Quality

Elevating cane farming through sustainable practices

Go to **canerise.com.au** and sign up to receive updates on the latest tools, stories and practices from the Mackay Whitsunday area.

CaneRise Mackay Whitsunday is here to help farmers grow productivity and profits through sustainable practices.

It's a central place to find:

- opportunities to get involved with water quality improvement projects in the region
- useful tools and resources for growers
- local support to implement sustainability practices
- funding opportunities for growers in the region
- stories from local growers who are reaping the benefits of practice changes.

CaneRise is supported by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation to help cane growers implement practices that improve their cane, soil and water quality in Reef catchment areas.

Project delivery partners

FARMACIST · LIQUA FORCE · maps · sra Sugar Research Australia · Reef Catchments · CANEGROWERS MACKAY · Catchment Solutions · Australian Government · Reef Trust · Great Barrier Reef Foundation