



Sugar Research
Australia

eNewsletter

Read all the exciting news happening in our industry, including an array of upcoming SRA events and SRA's contribution to the Australian and overseas team which cracked the genetic code of modern sugarcane variety R570.

Jason Eglinton departure

SRA General Manager of Variety Development Dr Jason Eglinton will depart SRA in July, to take up a position supporting a new initiative in Indonesia.

Since joining SRA in early 2017, Jason has played a pivotal leadership role, implementing significant improvements to the Variety Development program. Under his guidance, his team has achieved considerable outcomes for the sugar industry, including major increases in genetic gain and record increases in new variety adoption.

On behalf of SRA, Interim CEO Shaun Coffey thanked Jason for his strong commitment to the program and contributions to industry, and wished him well in his new role.

"This is an exciting and challenging opportunity for Jason, and we wish him every success," Mr Coffey said.

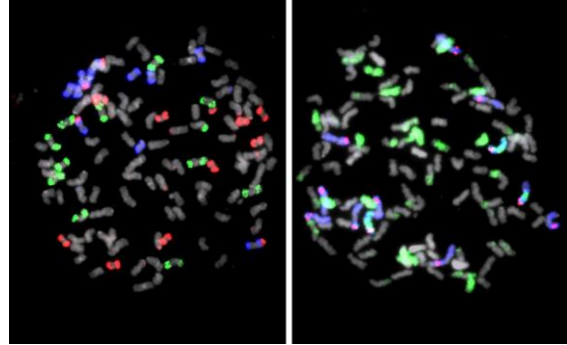
"It is always exciting to see a colleague moving on to new and bright opportunities, and Jason can leave SRA with our heartfelt thanks and with justifiable pride in his achievements over the past seven years," he said.

Jason will depart SRA on 11 July. SRA will undertake an international search for his replacement.

Complete genome sequence of modern sugarcane variety announced by Australian team



(Above): Dr Nathalie Piperidis, SRA's Cytogeneticist



(Above, left): The complex chromosome structure of sugarcane: image showing three different chromosomes.

(Above, right): Sugarcane chromosome with Ch1 in Blue, *S spontaneum* in green and ADH gene in red.

SRA Interim CEO Shaun Coffey has congratulated Dr Nathalie Piperidis, SRA's Cytogeneticist based at Mackay station for the part she has played in the collaborative team which has cracked the genetic code of a modern sugarcane cultivar called R570.

"This is great and exciting news," Shaun Coffey said. "The sequencing of the sugarcane genome is very significant, given its amazing complexity.

"Nathalie is one of the world's most renowned sugarcane cytogeneticists. For the past 10 years she has worked with a team of more than 30 researchers world-wide including Professor Robert Henry from The University of Queensland and Dr Karen Aitken from CSIRO in Australia.

"To improve the analysis of the genome composition of modern cultivars and their parental species, Nathalie developed a new cytogenetic method called 'whole chromosome painting' in 2020. The technique was used to provide accurate genomic data used for the sequence assembly of R570, for example the accurate number of chromosomes in R570 and the proportion of the two different *Saccharum* species of R570. This technique contributed to the breakthrough in the genetic code.

"Having the team's paper published in *Nature*, the world's leading multidisciplinary science journal, is a pinnacle achievement for any researcher."

[Read the joint statement with CSIRO and The University of Queensland](#)



If you missed the webinar featuring Prof. Robert Henry from The University of Queensland discussing diversification opportunities for sugarcane please view our recording.

The webinar was the second in a series of SRA webinars being run this year on subjects of interest to the sugarcane industry, presented by Dr Nathalie Piperidis.

[Watch: Engineering sugarcane to replace fossil carbon: webinar recording](#)



A series of webinars has been held this year as part of an [SRA/QUT project](#) to build a network of collaborators for a diversified Australian sugarcane industry. This next one is scheduled for 1 May.

Register now for this upcoming SRA/QUT webinar.

When: 11 am, 1 May 2024

[Register here](#)



(Above) CEO, Sunshine Sugars, Chris Connors and CEO LISC Enterprises, Dawei Zhang, announced the new agreement.

[Read the full story](#)

Australian Low GI Sugar enters China market

Sunshine Sugar has entered into a ten-year agency agreement with LISC Enterprises, a Melbourne health products company, for the distribution of Low GI Sugar into China.

China is estimated to have some 141 million Type 2 Diabetics for whom low GI foods are important.

LISC sources and supplies functional health products throughout China with ingredients companies in Dalian, Shanghai and Guangzhou.



Positive responses to knockdown workshops

Weed Scientist Emilie Fillols' advanced workshops on weed management using knockdown herbicides drew good numbers of growers at the Ingham event in late March (*pictured above*).

Participants' feedback has been very positive with 'extremely satisfied' being a common response about the new knowledge and information provided by the event.

Growers said the workshop had the 'right amount of detail', was 'very useful', asked for 'more courses like these' and 'looked forward to the next one'.

Plans are underway to arrange for the advanced pre-emergent agricultural chemicals workshop to be presented by Emilie at Ingham in the future.



Regional Sugar Milling Seminars well attended

SRA's R&D program, district productivity plans and progress on SRA-funded milling research projects were subjects on the agenda for regional seminars presented by SRA and QUT in Mackay, Townsville, Mulgrave, Rocky Point (with a video link to NSW sugar millers) and Bundaberg. Engaged discussion followed the presentations.

(Above, top: District Manager Far North Gavin Rodman addresses millers at Mulgrave Mill; and Head of Research Strategy and Investment, Jane Trindall addresses millers in Mackay. Below, top: A panel fields questions from millers in Mulgrave; Herbert millers

look on while District Manager Burdekin Terry Granshaw talks about the Herbert and Burdekin Productivity Plans; District Manager Central Dylan Wedel addresses millers in Mackay; Dylan talks to Katja Biggs who works for Wilmar at Plane Creek Mill.

10th Anniversary Research Fund - progress in awarding funding

Presentations were made at each of the Regional Sugar Milling Seminars in March by SRA's Head of Research Strategy and Investment, Jane Trindall (Mackay), Research Manager, Stephen Mudge (Townsville, Gordonvale and Rocky Point) and Head of Partnerships and Project Management, Bronwyn Venus (Bundaberg), about progress on the awarding of project funding for the SRA 10th Anniversary Research Fund.

Stage 1 closed on 20 December last year with a total of 163 concept notes submitted by researchers. Agronomy topics topped submission categories, followed by crop protection, diversification, varieties, milling, adoption, capacity/capability, environment and other.

A preliminary review of all concepts was completed by SRA. Following this, assessment was undertaken by expert Review Groups in specialist areas between 7 and 28 March. The Research Funding Panel is reviewing these assessments and will make recommendations for Stage 2 of the process this month. A call will be made for detailed proposals under Stage 2 in May with projects expected to commence in July - September this year.

The aim of the fund is to provide \$16 million over the next three-four years to foster greater collaboration across the whole research sector; build more engagement with, delivery to industry; and to increase research and development activity in the industry.



Action packed day planned for SRA's Meringa Station Field Day

It's your chance to meet some of SRA's scientists and talk to them about their research projects one-on-one.

Presentations and topics will include:

- Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) – Forecasting models and methods
- Emilie Fillols (SRA) – Emerging weeds (balsam pear) and industry weed survey
- Dr Kevin Powell (SRA) – Identifying alternatives to imidacloprid
- Dr Barry Salter (SRA) – Leaf & soil survey project
- Dr Felicity Atkin (SRA) – Variety update and station tour
- Joel Tierney (CANEGROWERS) – Mulgrave CCS Improvement Project
- Plus, drones, yellow canopy syndrome (YCS), extraneous matter and NIR, and more

WHEN: 8am-1pm, Tuesday 30 April, 2024

WHERE: 34 Hall Road, Gordonvale

Closed-in shoes are required.

Look forward to seeing you there!

Further information please contact Gavin Rodman, SRA District Manager – Far North.

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Weather, Climate & Water Quality Workshop - Tully

Join Alicia Buckle, Terrain NRM, Aaron Davis, James Cook University and Tony Webster, CSIRO for an update on local water quality results from Tully waterways collected over the past three years. Get your water quality questions and local insights ready when the data is presented.

This will be followed by the Weather and Climate Workshop with a dedicated meteorologist from the Bureau of Meteorology. Learn about recent weather events, climate drivers, anomalies and models plus see a demonstration of weather and climate products.

When: Wednesday 1 May, 9.30 am - 1.30 pm

Where: Tully Bowls Club Butler Street, Tully

Morning tea and lunch is included.

(Above): Tully Station

Please RSVP by 29 April for catering purposes to Erin Headon



MAPS/SRA field day - Wednesday 8 May - save the date!

View new sugarcane varieties and learn how they can benefit your business. Meet SRA's translation researchers and visit exhibits about the wide range of research work being undertaken by SRA and other industry representatives.

When: From 12.30 pm, Wednesday 8 May

Where: MAPS farm, Neilson Drive (off Peak Downs Highway), Victoria Plains

[More details and to RSVP](#)



Harvesting Efficiency Award won by Daryl Larsen

Nearly 100 growers attended the Herbert Walk and Talk meeting at SRA Ingham station in late March. The event was hosted by Herbert Cane Productivity Services Ltd and sponsored by SRA and Wilmar Sugar.

As part of the program, SRA Entomology Leader, Dr Kevin Powell talked to growers about his current research project looking at alternatives to imidacloprid for canegrub control.

District Manager - Northern and Agricultural Machinery Specialist, Phil Patane (*above, right*) was on hand to present the Harvesting Efficiency Award at the Herbert Sugar Industry Awards held during the event.

Winner was Daryl Larsen (*above, left*) who contributed to a better understanding of harvesting efficiency through becoming a harvesting efficiency trial collaborator. He has actively participated in harvesting efficiency workshops and forums and re-enforced his commitment to a more efficient harvesting sector through the adoption of new technology.



Get on the bus for two unique Southern District Sugar Industry Day Tours

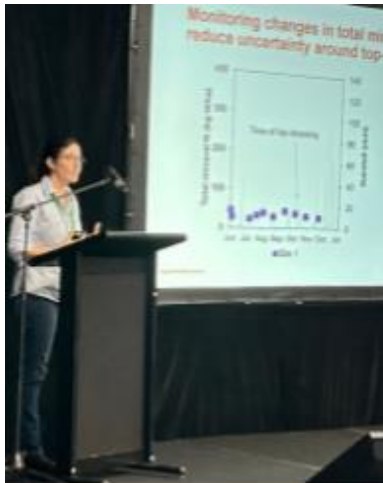
There's not one but TWO opportunities for southern sugarcane growers to try a whole new field day experience in May when the Southern District Bus Trips will be held.

SRA has partnered with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and Isis Productivity Limited (IPL) to create two events which highlight the current Southern District research projects, trials and programs of relevance and interest to sugarcane growers.

SRA/DAF Bus Trip - 7.30 am - 3.30 pm, 8 May

SRA/IPL Bus Trip - 7.30 am - 3.30pm, 21 May

[Reserve your spot on the tour of your choice: RSVP today](#)



Scenes from this week's ASSCT Conference in Townsville

(*Top left*): SRA Agronomist Erin Headon presents a paper at ASSCT on trials where growers in the Murray region were able to reduce uncertainty about rates of nitrogen applied using the SIX EASY STEPS Toolbox after legume crops.

(*Top right*): Manager Translation Research Dr Barry Salter speaks with Dai Truong from Global Mind Agriculture at the SRA stand at ASSCT.

(*Bottom left*): District Delivery Officer Glen Park presented a poster assessing the value of applying plant growth regulators to standover cane.

(*Bottom right*): QDAF Agronomist, Jack Robertson worked with SRA's Project Agronomist Julian Connellan (*absent*) on grower Neil Maitland's cane farm at Aloomba to assess the value of Sunn Hemp as a rotation crop.

[ASSCT full conference program](#)

Improve your farm profitability with FEAT

The Farm Economic Analysis Tool (FEAT Online) is a free, purpose-built online decision-making tool that assists sugarcane growers and advisers with business planning.

Growers are invited to a free interactive workshop to learn more. Workshops will be held at:

Herbert - 30 April, 10 am - 1 pm, HCPSL Office, 181 Fairford Rd, Ingham

Mackay - 1 May, 9am - 12 pm, SRA Mackay Station, 26135 Peak Downs Highway, Te Kowai

Burdekin - 9 May, 8.30 am - 12 pm, SRA Burdekin Station, 30962 Bruce Highway, Brandon

Cairns - 17 May, 10 am - 1 pm, SRA Meringa Station - 34 Hall Road, Gordonvale.

FEAT Online was developed by agricultural economists from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to assist sugarcane growers to measure the profitability of making farm system changes. The tool helps growers mitigate risk by enabling users to test different farming options before making financial commitments.

Features include:

- options for growing fallow crops
- an enhanced irrigation module
- refinements to labour costs summaries
- an improved user interface.

[Register for a workshop near you today](#)

Current vacancies

We are recruiting for the following positions:

- [Statistician and Data Analyst](#)
- [Receptionist](#)
- [Casual Field Hands - Mackay](#)
- [Casual Field Hands - Burdekin](#)
- [Casual Field Hands - Gordonvale](#)



[Check for more jobs](#)

Events

[Bureau of Meteorology weather meetings](#) - Meringa Field Day, Tuesday 30 April, Tully, Wednesday 1 May.

[SIX EASY STEPS South Johnstone workshop](#) - Thursday 9 May, 8.30 am - 4.30 pm, Australian Sugar Heritage Centre with SRA Agronomist Dr Danielle Skocaj.

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