



December 2024

Summer issue of Cane Matters now available online



The Summer edition of SRA's quarterly Cane Matters magazine is now available. This edition is filled with useful information for growers, news on varieties and milling, and other important activities happening in our sugar industry. If you usually receive a hard copy by mail - it's on the way!

[Read Cane Matters Summer 2024/25](#)

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## Milling Centre of Excellence workshopped



The prospect of establishing an Advanced Sugar Manufacturing Centre of Excellence was the subject of a workshop attended by Australian sugar millers, researchers and SRA personnel last month. The aim of the Centre is to improve research, development and extension capabilities and position the sector to take advantage of advanced manufacturing and diversification opportunities. (Above): Farleigh Mill Mackay

[Read more on page 9 of Cane Matters](#)

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## Sunn Hemp workshop well received by growers



About 50 attendees, including local growers, gathered on Neil Maitland's farm at Aloomba last month for a workshop to discuss Sunn Hemp as a beneficial rotation crop for sugarcane.

SRA Agronomist, Julian Connellan, was among the collaborative industry team who discussed topics ranging from nitrogen application rates following a Sunn Hemp green manure crop, to different agtech which could be used in the crop. Presenters included CANEGROWERS Smartcane BMP facilitator, Joe Tierney, Farmacist Extension leader, Gordonvale, Belinda Billing, and Agronomist, Eduardo de Lima Reis, DPI Agricultural Economist, Edward Vaggelas, and Senior Development Officer South Johnstone, Marcus Bulstrode. Neil gave his perspective on incorporating large amounts of biomass produced by Sunn Hemp.

(Above): Growers inspect an airseeder on Neil Maitland's farm at Aloomba.

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## New SRA District Manager Northern - Jessica Portch



SRA has appointed a new Northern District Manager, who will commence the role on 6 January 2025. Jessica Portch is an agricultural professional with extensive experience in biosecurity compliance, best management practice, operational management and stakeholder engagement across the banana, racing and rural industries.

Jessica was formally employed as a Grower Support Coordinator and Extension Officer by the Australia banana industry's peak body, the Australian Banana Growers Council. Prior to that, she served as the Senior Compliance Coordinator for Biosecurity Queensland's Panama TR4 Program. She has also worked as a Stipendiary Steward for Racing Queensland. Jessica is excited about her new role with SRA based at Tully Station.

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## SRA Technical and Planning Forum



A two-day SRA R&D Technical and Planning Forum was held this month in Townsville with researchers and industry representatives. Day 1 saw SRA Researchers, Managers and SRA Research Funding Panel

members discuss significant research, key findings and ideas to improve SRA's research quality and impact.

Day 2 attendees included representatives from across the industry to evaluate R&D gaps and priorities to inform R&D investment planning for FY26. The forum was the first step in providing the industry with a more structured and visible R&D investment planning framework to support SRA achieve the goals of the [10-year R&D Plan \(2024-34\)](#) and address SRA's Independent Performance review. (Above): Tully grower David Singh discusses industry issues with SRA staff.



## Moth borers & weed maps in ARC PhD scholarships

[Exotic moth borers - conservation biocontrol](#), and [Remote sensing of priority weeds in sugarcane](#) are the titles of two of eight PhD project opportunities offered in a second Round of scholarships by the ARC Training Centre in Plant Biosecurity which are of particular relevance to the sugarcane industry. Expressions of interest for the nine [\\$40,000/yr tax-free scholarships](#) close on 22 January 2025.

SRA is a Partner Organisation of the ARC Training Centre in Plant Biosecurity which officially opened last month at the Australian National University in Canberra.

[Read the full list of current projects](#)

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## Dates for your 2025 Calendar

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>18-19 February</b>     | AgriFutures' EvokeAg - Brisbane                    |
| <b>10-11 March</b>        | SRA R&D Showcase - Brisbane                        |
| <b>12-13 March</b>        | SRA Women in Sugar Science forum - Townsville      |
| <b>24 March</b>           | Regional Sugar Milling Seminar - Mackay            |
| <b>March-June</b>         | Field Days TBA                                     |
| <b>28 March</b>           | Regional Sugar Milling Seminar - Condong           |
| <b>31 March</b>           | Regional Sugar Milling Seminar - Bundaberg         |
| <b>31 March - 1 April</b> | Women in Sugar Conference (Mackay)                 |
| <b>2 April</b>            | Regional Sugar Milling Seminar - Townsville        |
| <b>3 April</b>            | Regional Sugar Milling Seminar - South Johnstone   |
| <b>28-29 April</b>        | CANEGROWERS' Sugar Cubed Conference - Brisbane     |
| <b>28 April - 2 May</b>   | ASSCT conference - Brisbane                        |
| <b>19-23 May</b>          | Rural Discovery Week - Brisbane Exhibition Grounds |
| <b>19 May</b>             | Tully Mill Sugar Industry Centenary Event          |
| <b>24-25 May</b>          | Ingham Careers Day                                 |
| <b>9-17 August</b>        | Brisbane RNA Show (Ekka)                           |



**SRA wishes you and your loved ones, a safe and happy Christmas season. SRA offices will be closed from Wednesday 25 December 2024 and will re-open on Thursday 2 January 2025.**



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