

NEWS RELEASE

Crop prospects better than expected

A significantly improved crop outlook in the Burdekin has boosted Wilmar Sugar's forecast for the 2016 season.

About 15.77 million tonnes of cane is now expected to be harvested and crushed across Wilmar Sugar's eight mills.

Cane Supply and Grower Relations General Manager Paul Giordani said that total was about 700,000 tonnes of cane more than early expectations and a slight increase on last year's crop result.

"We finalised our official pre-season crop estimation process last week," Mr Giordani said.

"We've seen the most positive change in the Burdekin. Our estimate for the season is 8.3 million tonnes, which is about 600,000 tonnes better than originally expected.

"We had concerns late last year about how the dry weather and irrigation restrictions in place at the time may impact the crop.

"However, the early plant cane is looking excellent and, overall, the crop is growing very well."

The Herbert's crop estimate has also increased, with 4.45 million tonnes of cane predicted.

“Rain in the past two months has provided a much-needed boost to the crop,” Mr Giordani said.

“Further rain will be required to keep the crop growing well.

“Last year showed in-season rain can have a big impact on crop growth, with the Herbert’s estimate increasing by almost half a million tonnes during the season.”

Proserpine’s crop estimate is 1.71 million tonnes – up marginally on last year’s total.

Plane Creek’s crop is also expected to be slightly larger, at 1.31 million tonnes.

“The Proserpine and Plane Creek regions have benefited from reasonably regular showers throughout the wet season and the estimates have changed little from our early forecasts,” Mr Giordani said.

Wilmar Sugar representatives will commence discussions with grower representatives in the coming weeks about season start dates.

“The weather forecast for the first half of the season suggests it could be wetter than usual in all regions,” he said.

“We’re keen to start crushing as early as possible to provide the best opportunity for all cane to be harvested and crushed.

“Crop size, crop maturity, the weather outlook and mill readiness are among the factors we consider when determining start dates and I’m sure all of these will be covered in discussions with grower representatives.”

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26 April 2016