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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Cane railway gets crush-ready**

Wilmar's 560 kilometre Herbert cane rail network comprises enough track to stretch from Macknade to Sarina, south of Mackay.

Preparing it for a safe and reliable start to the hectic crushing season in just nine weeks' time is no small challenge for Wilmar's Herbert rail maintenance crew of about 30 employees. Especially considering the damaged caused by heavy rain and floods in December and February.

It's not just 560 kilometres of rail this team has to worry about. It's also the 90 bridges, 225 sidings and 150 road crossings making up this extensive network that is so crucial to growers, millers and exporters.

Herbert Regional Cane Supply Manager Jim Kirchner is the man responsible for keeping the cane moving once the season begins. He said rail maintenance crews had to factor in significant additional work this year.

"We've had to add about 13.5 kilometres of flood repairs to the usual heavy work program," he said.

"This equates to about \$750,000 in unplanned costs this year on top of the annual \$4.5 million we spend on keeping the network up and running," he said.

"We map out our works program and plan capital and maintenance for up to five years ahead, so our railway maintenance team has done a great job factoring in this additional repair work," Mr Kirchner said.

Railway maintenance crew members Joey Artavilla, Mario Fodriga and Paul Abenzi (pictured) are part of the team completing planned maintenance work on 4.5km of track on the Bambaroo line.

Work involves removing railway sleepers and track, and replacing ballast.

Other major works this year include the relay of more than 750 metres of mainline at Wharf Line and a redeck on Boundary Creek Bridge.

"Maintaining the safety and integrity of our cane rail network is our highest priority," Mr Kirchner said.

**ENDS**



*CAPTION: Wilmar's Joey Artavilla, Mario Fodriga and Paul Abenzi*

*More information: Ellanah Ritchie 0447 075 181*