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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Harvesting demo to cut to the bottom line**

A month-long field demonstration will test harvesting best practice methods in the Herbert district so cane growers and harvesting contractors will finally have an answer to the million-dollar question: “How does it affect my bottom line?”

Two Herbert harvesting contractors will take part in the demonstration that will compare their standard harvesting practices to best practice methods.

The data collected will allow both contractors and growers to see if the best practice method delivers more tonnes of sugar per hectare, and therefore more revenue for the industry.

Sugar Research Australia (SRA) Harvesting Adoption Officer Carol Norris said the demonstration would give local industry answers on the economic viability of implementing harvesting best practice in the region.

“This harvesting demonstration has come at the request of growers who wanted to see how the best practice method would play out in local conditions and if potential revenue increases would be worth any increased costs,” Ms Norris said.

The request came after growers toured the Childers and Rocky Point cane growing regions last year where harvesting best practice has yielded positive results.

Herbert River CANEGROWERS Chairman Michael Pisano said the upcoming demonstration could drive change in the local sugar industry.

“If there’s money to be made in adjusting harvesting practices, then it makes sense to do that, and it’s good to see the industry coming together to collect and analyse local data,” Mr Pisano said.

Ms Norris said SCHLOT Live cane loss monitoring systems would be fitted to each of the harvesters taking part in the demonstration, which will start in mid-August. The system will track how much cane is lost through the harvester’s extractor using current harvesting settings versus best practice settings.

“It will ultimately provide the local industry with information on how much potential revenue is being left behind in the paddock,” she said.

Grower-contractor Dwayne Morelli owns one of the two harvesters that will be fitted with the cane loss monitoring technology.

He said data would be collected from about 18 blocks – two blocks from each of the farms in his harvesting group.

“We’ll be able to compare cane loss against harvester ground speed, fan speed, fuel consumption and time in paddock, amongst other factors, to determine where the economic sweet spot is,” Mr Morelli said.

He said the data would enable growers and harvesting contractors to compare old ways to new ways and make a decision on which option best suits their operations.

The demonstration involves a significant level of investment from Sugar Research Australia, Herbert Cane Productivity Services Limited, the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Wilmar Sugar Australia.

SRA will assign six staff to data collection duties for the trial. Two will be assigned to each cane siding to analyse extraneous matter samples and coordinate rakes. There will also be an SRA staff member sitting in each harvester cabin to measure distance and settings.

Wilmar has committed funding for an additional fibre analyst at Victoria Mill to ensure that individual CCS is allocated to the payment of the cane from these trials.

Wilmar's Herbert Regional Operations Manager Adam Douglas said he had enjoyed working with growers over the past three years to develop a better understanding of how harvesting practices impact the bottom line.

"Local growers have given clear guidelines on what information they need to adopt harvesting best practice methods. These demonstrations will clearly show the financial impacts of different harvesting methods in local conditions," Mr Douglas said.

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*PHOTOS (available on request)*



*CAPTION: Sugar Research Australia Harvesting Adoption Officer Phil Patane, harvesting contractor Dwayne Morelli and Herbert Canegrowers Chairman Michael Pisano*



*CAPTION: Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries economist Brendon Nothard, Sugar Research Australia's Phil Patane, Wilmar's Herbert Regional Operations Manager Adam Douglas and Herbert Canegrowers Director Chris Bosworth*



*CAPTION: Dwayne Morelli's harvester is one of two in the region being used in the demonstration, driven by son Damian Morelli (right)*