

Monday, 25 November 2019

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Herbert mills finish the 2019 season**

The 2019 Herbert crush came to an end at 2.57am today when Wilmar's Victoria Mill processed the last cane for the season.

Herbert Regional Operations Manager Adam Douglas said Wilmar's two Herbert mills had crushed a total of 4.056 million tonnes of cane this year to manufacture about 560,000 tonnes of raw sugar.

He said the biggest challenges this year had come from the weather.

"We had a reasonable run with our factories reliability-wise, and Macknade had a stellar year with reliability of 90 per cent.

"The major cause of lost time was wet weather at the beginning of the season. We then had a long run of dry weather which caused the cane tonnes to drop off."

Mr Douglas said the final crop was about 205,000 tonnes below original estimates – a decrease of almost five per cent.

"However, the dry conditions did support sugar content towards the end of the season, and our preliminary season CCS of 13.89 units is higher than forecast."

He said growers across the Herbert would welcome some rain now to help establish next year's sugarcane crop.

Mr Douglas thanked all sectors of the local sugar industry for their efforts to grow, harvest and process the 2019 crop.

"The growers and contractors have done a tremendous job in getting the crop off, in sometimes trying conditions.

"I'd also like to acknowledge the 520 people Wilmar employs here during the season for their work in processing the crop."

Herbert Work Execution Manager Eric Girgenti said Wilmar would invest \$150 million across its eight factories over the coming months, despite the current low world sugar prices.

“We have a full maintenance and capital program ahead of us. We’ll utilise our permanent workforce and bring in additional local workers to bolster the maintenance effort,” he said.

“As well as our normal preventative maintenance program, we’ll be focusing on addressing reliability issues experienced during this crush,”

Mr Girgenti said major capital projects would include a \$3.5 million upgrade to the boiler control system at Macknade Mill, a new sugar scrubber at Victoria Mill and the manufacture of 350 new cane bins.

Herbert Cane Supply Manager Jim Kirchner urged residents and visitors to remain vigilant around Wilmar’s cane rail network despite the season finish.

“Our locos will continue to operate over the next fortnight as we deliver rakes of empty bins to the sidings for maintenance season storage,” Mr Kirchner said.

Wilmar, in conjunction with Herbert River Canegrowers, is holding a charity golf day on Sunday 8 December to celebrate the end of the crush and support mental health.

Mr Douglas encouraged growers, harvesting contractors and mill employees to get a four-person team together and take part.

To register, contact Herbert River Canegrowers Manager Frank Scardamaglia on 4776 5350.

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