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NEWS RELEASE

Pioneer Mill crushes the last cane for 2019

The last bin of cane was crushed at Wilmar's Pioneer Mill at 1.41pm yesterday (*Thursday 21 November*), bringing an end to the 2019 Burdekin crush.

Burdekin Regional Operations Manager Paul Turnbull said Wilmar's four Burdekin mills had processed a total of 7.9 million tonnes this year to manufacture 1.2 million tonnes of raw sugar.

"The final crop was about 340,000 tonnes down on original estimates due to the run of dry weather. But the sugar content was high, which lifted our overall sugar make," he said.

"The preliminary season CCS for the Burdekin is 14.9, which is very close to last year's high of 15 units."

Mr Turnbull said the fire in Pioneer Mill's bagasse conveyor system last month had created significant challenges for the local sugar industry.

"It definitely threw a spanner in the works. But we pulled out all stops to repair the damage and get back up and running within 12 days.

"We've now finished processing all of the contracted cane at Pioneer, and we've finished the season in a reasonable timeframe."

Mr Turnbull thanked all Burdekin growers and contractors for their efforts in getting the 2019 Burdekin crop off.

"I'd also like to acknowledge the 900 people we employ during the season for their work in processing the crop."

Mr Turnbull said Wilmar would maintain investment in its factories over the coming months, despite the current low world sugar prices.

“Wilmar is investing about \$150 million across the milling business, and a significant portion of that is being spent in the Burdekin.

“Our Pioneer workshop teams will be doing two complete loco rebuilds, at a cost of \$1.7 million each.

“We’re also doing major overhauls of our three largest generator units at a total cost of \$11.8 million. And we’re spending \$1 million on a new intermediate carrier at Invicta Mill.”

Burdekin Cane Supply Manager Peter Luke urged residents and visitors to remain vigilant around Wilmar’s cane rail network over the next two weeks.

“Our cane trains will continue to operate as we deliver rakes of empty bins to the sidings for the maintenance season.

“I can’t stress enough the need for people to slow down as they approach level crossings. Use your train brain and always give way to cane trains.”

Wilmar’s Herbert and Plane Creek mills are expected to crush out on Monday (25 November).

ENDS

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