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NEWS RELEASE

Sugar industry veteran hands over the reins

Heading into his 50th crushing season, Peter Luke says there's not much he hasn't seen or done in the sugar industry.

From his start as an office clerk at Kalamia Mill in 1970, Mr Luke ended up managing cane supply operations for the biggest canegrowing region in Australia.

He has now handed over the reins for Wilmar's Burdekin Cane Supply Manager role to John Tait, who has moved north from Wilmar's Plane Creek Mill at Sarina.

Mr Luke said he was looking forward to transitioning to retirement after a lifetime of living and breathing sugar.

"Over the last five decades, I've worked in a number of different roles at Pioneer, Invicta and Inkerman mills in the Burdekin, as well as Victoria and Macknade mills in the Herbert, and I've seen a lot of change," he said.

"There have been huge advancements in safety and technology.

"When I first started it was okay to come to work in shorts. Thankfully that's changed and there's now a big focus on safety and wellbeing.

"The mills have become more automated, and technology like GPS, brake vans and harvest management systems have improved cane supply and logistics," Mr Luke said.

Wilmar's new Burdekin Cane Supply Manager is another industry veteran. Mr Tait has worked in the sugar industry since 1977 when he started as a juice boy at Mourilyan Mill, about 8km south of Innisfail.

He's worked in mills throughout Queensland and New South Wales – the last three years as Plane Creek Cane Supply Manager.

Mr Tait said he was looking forward to the challenges of his new role.

"I've worked in multi-mill regions before, but the Burdekin is a bigger proposition, with more cane, more mills and more people to manage.

"Peter is working with me as I transition into the new role, and he'll be around for a little while longer to ensure a smooth start to our 2020 cane supply operations," Mr Tait said.

The season will start on 2 June at Inkerman Mill. Wilmar's Pioneer, Kalamia and Invicta mills will start a week later on 9 June.

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John Tait (left) has taken over the role of Burdekin Cane Supply Manager from industry veteran Peter Luke (right), who is transitioning into retirement.

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