

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUNDABERG SUGAR INVESTS IN ENERGY EFFICIENT IRRIGATORS

As one of Australia's largest cane growers Bundaberg Sugar is taking a pro-active role in meeting the challenges of spiralling electricity prices by purchasing an extra four new energy efficient linear irrigators to add to its current fleet.

General Manager Farms, Simon Doyle said given the ever increasing costs of electricity to irrigators, Bundaberg Sugar chose this equipment as it uses around 50% less power than the existing winch irrigators. The company now owns fourteen linear and centre pivot irrigators and intends to add to this number as and when funds become available.

Bundaberg Sugar has 9,068 hectares of its land under cane and is investing capital and resources to increase the cane volume in the Bundaberg district. An additional 300 hectares of new land was planted this year bringing the company's total area planted in 2014 to around 2,000 hectares out of an expected 6,800 hectares to be harvested in the 2015 crush. This will assist in boosting the 2015 crop and progress towards Bundaberg Sugar's aim of 2 million tonnes of cane to supply the Bundaberg mills.

"Our motivation for investing in these irrigators is to increase productivity, reduce power consumption and improve water usage efficiency, quantify all the benefits and demonstrate what savings are achievable. We are expecting a substantial yield increase as a result," Mr Doyle said.

"We are going down this track because it is cost effective and as we prove and record the benefits, the data generated can be shared with our grower partners. This will hopefully assist them with evaluating their irrigation options.

"Power prices have significantly changed the assessment process for irrigators and we have to look for every opportunity to reduce irrigating costs. The challenge with linear and pivot irrigators is the high initial capital cost and maybe this is another area where government could assist growers," he said.

Mr Doyle added Bundaberg Sugar is currently exploring the viability of solar powered irrigation systems for future use.

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