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Rain delays harvest

Untimely rain over the past few days has cast a grey pall over this year’s sugarcane harvest in the Mackay/Plane Creek regions.

Only weeks into the harvest and with less than 10 per cent of the crop crushed, growers and harvesters alike are concerned at rain-caused delays from the rain which has varied from 40 – 80 mm in growers’ gauges across the region with some reports of in excess of 150 mm up in the Pioneer Valley, said CANEGROWERS Mackay Chairman, Kevin Borg. However, on the upside, the rain will help prevent the drought conditions growers experienced in the April-November months last year.

“Even when the rain stops – and hopefully that is today - it will be several days before it is dry enough to get heavy machinery back onto the ground,” he said.

“Even then the paddocks will be soggy and difficult to harvest with bogging more likely,” he said.

“Growers were just starting to see sugar content climb (11.5 Mackay and 13 Plane Creek) after a very poor start. The rain will almost definitely affect that and reduce our hopes of a good seasonal average boosting our returns.

“Mills in the district have shut down due to a lack of supply. CANEGROWERS Mackay’s grower representatives in conjunction with millers will monitor the start-up date once the rain system has passed.

“Ideally growers like to see the crush wrapped up and the next crop on the way by the second week in November.

“But now it seems there is less hope of an early finish for the mills with the harvest likely to finish at the end of November or early December, depending on weather and milling performance.

“This compares with a finish of 2 November at Wilmar Sugar mill at Sarina last year (1.143 million tonnes of cane) and mid-November finish for Mackay Sugar mills crushing 4.67 million tonnes of cane.”

The Mackay/Plane Creek district is working to achieve a total crush of around 6.3 million tonnes of cane this season, with no cane is left in the paddock to be held over until next year.

ends

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