

Question on Notice

No. 201

Asked on 16 March 2022

MRS J GILBERT ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline how the Palaszczuk Government is supporting the Queensland sugar industry?

ANSWER:

Sugarcane is an important industry to Queensland with a strong reputation globally. Approximately 95 per cent of Australia's raw sugar is produced in Queensland and approximately 85 per cent of our sugar is exported to important markets such as South Korea, Indonesia and Japan. The Australian Sugar Milling Council identified that the sugar industry contributed around \$2.3 billion to the Queensland economy and employed around 3 700 Queenslanders in 2020-21. The sugar industry has weathered COVID-19 related disruptions, unfavourable weather and other challenges. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) works with the sugar industry in key areas including sustainable production, research and biosecurity.

The Queensland Government has a strong and productive working relationship with the sugar industry.

There are many measures in place to improve sugarcane farming sustainability credentials and to address the impact of land-based run-off into the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef). Collaborative projects are funded, supported and implemented by the Federal and Queensland Governments, agricultural bodies, research institutions and the non-government sector. For example, in collaboration with the Federal Government, the Queensland Government has provided over \$14.6 million since 2016 for agronomic extension to assist cane farmers to manage nutrients on farm, increase their profitability and minimise fertiliser run-off entering the Reef.

CANEGROWERS is currently delivering phase three of the Smartcane Best Management Practice (BMP) program aimed at improving the productivity, profitability and sustainability of cane farm enterprises. \$6 million has been provided to CANEGROWERS from 2018 to 2022 to deliver this program. Smartcane BMP provides a practical and robust means for cane growers to demonstrate their stewardship of the environment while strengthening their productivity and profits. It is voluntary, industry led and government funded and, to date, around 150 000 ha has been accredited under the program.

In 2020-21, \$2.85 million was provided to Sugar Research Australia for sugarcane research, development and extension projects. These projects will focus on issues such as productivity improvements, accelerating improvements in yield, measuring soil health and establishing benchmarks and researching potential management of moth borers.

The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority also provides up to \$1.3 million through the Sustainability Loan Scheme for upgrades on cane farms to achieve financial or

environmental sustainability. On average, around \$14 million is provided in loans to sugarcane farmers through these schemes each year.

DAF maintains biosecurity legislation to help protect the sugarcane sector from the entry of serious pests and diseases. This is achieved through maintaining Biosecurity Zones that manage the movement of sugarcane plants, machinery and other equipment into and between zones, and through an accreditation system, delivered in partnership by sugar services companies. DAF works closely with industry on the Sugar Industry Biosecurity Committee that provides technical advice on the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed. To reduce the impacts of the parasitic Red Witch Weed to sugarcane, some pasture grasses and other cereal crops such as wheat, sorghum, maize and rice, an eradication program is underway that is being led by DAF.