



World Association of  
Beet and Cane Growers



## NEWS FROM WABCG

### EDITORIAL

We just launched our '**WABCG Youth Programme**', and I hope you will be interested in it!

Indeed, considering that our association has the ca-



capacity to link sugar cane and sugar beet growers from all over the world, and that experiences abroad can be highly valuable in a cursus – as well as hosting a young foreigner can be an exceptional experience, we launched this experiment in 2023.

The goal is to help growers' children, aged 18-26, to spend one month (or more) on a farm in another country to help with work on the farm.

We are just building a database, with:

- **Hosting profile:** a WABCG farmer who is willing to host a young foreigner and will provide details about the farm, the accommodation, the best period to come, the work that will be asked for on the farm.
- **Youth profile:** WABCG representatives will be asked if their children (18-26) are volunteers for such an experience, detailing their profile, the duration of the trip, etc.

WABCG will then study the profiles that could match.

Do you want to try it?

Well, go onto our platform, here is the link:

<https://forms.gle/2vFrwnVyoXgWck18>

I hope you will like it!

**David Thompson, President  
WABCG**

## APRIL 2023

### NEWS FROM MALAWI

**Southern Malawi, in the beginning of March, witnessed a real carnage never seen in a long, time, because of the cyclone Freddy:** very heavy, rains mudslides and flooding, leaving death and destruction in its wake.

In some part, the amount of rain that fell in a day or two, equaled a year's rainfall.

It is a real tragedy for the entire country: so far 676 people have been confirmed dead and over 50,000 are missing and or unaccounted for. The death is expected to rise around 1,000 people. Search and rescue operations continue to this day.

**Sugarcane farmers in southern Malawi have been affected gravely.** 760 farmers (out of our 7,200 members) have been left without food and their fields destroyed. Amongst them, 420 have lost their maize fields, 10 lost their livestock, 20 lost their houses; and 250 lost their properties.



**Farmers need help!** If you are interested in helping Malawi growers, please contact me by email at [amtengula@yahoo.com](mailto:amtengula@yahoo.com)

**Alexander Mtengula, CEO  
SUGAM, Malawi**



## NEWS FROM JAPAN

The yield in 2022 was 64.23 t/ha, 9% lower than the previous year, which was a good crop. This is because the growth of the root part was suppressed by diseases and moisture damage caused by heavy rains and high temperature after July. Sugar content was 16.1%, the lowest sugar content in

the last 7 years. Cercospora and other diseases are thought to be the reasons. When heavy rain and high temperatures overlap, diseases and moisture damage often occur, which greatly affects sugar beet production.



Wet damaged field in the middle of August

In 2022, the planted area has decreased by about 2,300ha compared to the previous year.

The main reason for this is the shift to labor-saving crops such as wheat and beans. Due to the scale of management expands, in recent years, Japan has been shifting from transplanting method to direct method in order to save labor. (Direct method in 2000 was 3.2%, in 2022 was 40.2%) On the other hand, the international price of chemical fertilizer raw materials has increased because of increased global demand for grains and rising energy prices, and fertilizer prices are soaring in Japan as well. It is time to review the price of government subsidies, but due to the good harvest of sugar beet in the past few years, it has been decided to reduce the price of government subsidies from 2023. Our urgent issue is to secure income for producers under this situation.

We are working to reduce fertilizer costs by analyzing soil and accurately grasping nutrients, effectively utilizing organic materials such as compost, and promoting the development and use of inexpensive fertilizers with revised ingredients.

**Tadao Kaneshita, Deputy Division Director of Sugar Beet & Seed Sect.**  
**HOKUREN (Federation of Agricultural Cooperative), Japan**

## NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

What a difference a year makes!

Looking back on the previous News from Australia column, written by former-CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri in April last year, it seems the mood in Australia's sugar industry was one of optimism.

Fast-forward 12 months and that positivity has been dampened, with many growers frustrated about their potential being stifled by matters outside of their control.



With record high sugar prices and an above average crop, 2022 should have been a bumper year for Australia's sugarcane farmers.

In reality, it turned out to be a very difficult year for many, with around one million tonnes of cane left unharvested despite the crush continuing well into January, more than six weeks longer than ideal.

The extended season meant that CCS levels dropped significantly in late cut cane. So much so that that by January, cutting cane simply became uneconomical for many growers.

While wet weather, workforce shortages and an above average crop certainly played a part in the unprecedented season length, poor milling performance was also a major contributor in a number of districts.

In the months since crushing finally ended, vines, rats and pigs have become significant problems for growers in regions with large areas of standover cane.

Meanwhile, those mills that were unable to perform to acceptable standards are now racing to carry out vital maintenance and capital works in a much shorter timeframe, in a desperate bid to avoid a repeat performance in 2023.

It hasn't been all doom and gloom, however, with the industry taking some important steps towards securing a diversified future over the past 12 months.

In July, led by CANEGROWERS, the industry's peak bodies came together to release a strategic roadmap aimed at achieving a diversified, profitable and sustainable future.

"Sugar Plus", as the roadmap is known, envisions the sugar industry becoming a major player in Australia's bioeconomy, fuelling the future of food, energy and fabrication, while also maintaining our successful export sugar capacity. We know that the green and renewable crop we grow has huge potential to be the raw material for products such as



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sustainable aviation fuel and bioplastics, and the roadmap outlines the priorities and actions needed to make this future a reality.

While Sugar Plus points to the future potential, we have also been delivering on our sustainability credentials built up over the past decade. The Australian industry made history with the export of our first-ever shipment of fully certified, sustainably produced and traceable raw sugar from the Port of Townsville in mid-November.

In a world first for the use of the technology, this sugar, produced from cane grown by Smartcane BMP accredited growers, was traceable through the supply chain to the end user in South Korea.

The proof-of-concept trial was the culmination of years of work by CANEGROWERS and KPMG Origins, working with a range of supply chain partners, to create a platform that uses a blockchain approach to trace the provenance of sugar from paddock to package.

In a world where more and more consumers are demanding to know the origins of the products they purchase, it is our goal is to make Australia a world leader in the export of certified sustainably produced raw sugar.

So, while growers may be a little anxious about the coming harvest, and we may have many constraints to manage our, the Australian sugarcane industry continues to drive for the use of innovation and creativity to deliver on what is clearly a strong potential for our industry in emerging industries and markets.

**Owen Menkens**

*Chairman, CANEGROWERS Australia*



**Save the dates!**

**WABCG Council 2023**

13-16 June 2023  
Cali, Colombia

[www.50procana.org](http://www.50procana.org)

**WABCG/ISO Consultation**

20 November 2023  
London, United Kingdom

## NEWS FROM KENYA

The rain season is finally here. Farmers in most parts of the country are set and anticipating for the long rains season between the months of March to May. The onset of rains has delayed, nevertheless, it is great to note that light showers are already being experienced in most regions and farmers are full of hope especially after such a long and devastating drought period that has hit the country.

This coupled with the plummeting value of the Kenyan shilling has pushed the prices of basic commodities past the roof top. Experts have described it as the worst drought to have ever hit in the country in the past four decades.

The biting famine caused the death of many livestock and even endangered the lives of millions of Kenyans. The weatherman has attributed this to climate change which is currently a global concern. Farmers have been advised to take advantage of any rains received and consider growing early maturity crops since the weather forecast indicates that most regions might receive below-average rainfall in this season.

Sugarcane farmers in the counties bordering Lake Victoria, highlands in the west and south of Rift Valley will also have to plan their farming activities well to conform with the changing rainfall patterns in the regions as this has a direct impact on the sugarcane productivity. In the quest to enhance food production, the Government of Kenya has subsidized fertilizers and made them available to all small-holder farmers across the country. Cane farmers are being encouraged to take advantage of this subsidy to acquire fertilizers at a relatively cheaper price to help improve sugarcane yields.

Statistics from the recent Annual Cane Availability Survey that was conducted in December 2022 by Sugar directorate in collaboration with the Sugar Research Institute and Sugar Mills indicates that the surface area under cane has increased significantly by 6.72% from 221,916Ha in November 2021 to 236,820Ha in November 2022. A steady improvement in area under cane production in the country







has been noted over the recent years. However, projection of yields as at November 2022 is 70.27 Tonnes/Ha which is a reduction of 7.11% compared to the previous year's actual yield of 75.65 Tonnes/Ha. This may be attributed to high cost of inputs and prolonged dry season experienced in the sugarcane growing zones.

Here are key initiatives in the Sugar Industry:

- **Minimum tillage**

Trials on minimum tillage in sugarcane farming aimed at reducing the production costs are at an advanced stage. Farmers have had an opportunity to visit the trial sites through the field days organized by Sugar Directorate.

- **Cane Testing Units (CTUs)**

The Directorate is engaging the respective Government Agencies to certify and fully operationalize the eleven (11) CTUs that have been under pilot in eleven (11) sugar mills where they were installed. This is a major milestone in the sugar industry in Kenya as it makes a shift from weight-based to sucrose-based payment system.



- **Single eye bud chip technology**

In a bid to ensure adequate seed cane availability to farmers, the Directorate is still committed to promote and facilitate adoption of the single eye bud chip technology to enhance faster multiplication and reduction in initial costs of production.



- **Soil testing**

The Sugar Directorate has always been at the forefront of advocating for soil testing to meet the specific nutrient needs in the soil. This has been enhanced through farmer education in shows and exhibitions, therefore, linking sugarcane farmers to service providers in a bid to enhance sugarcane yield.

- **New project**

Sugar directorate is currently developing a concept note on the use of biochar in improving soil fertility. This will be achieved through introduction of bio-fertilizer and microbial inoculant for use in the cane farming to rehabilitate the degraded soils. The bio-fertilizer and inoculant will be produced through value addition of the industrial wastes (bagasse and filter mud).

- **Symposium**

The first ever Sugar Industry Innovation Symposium was successfully organized by Sugar Directorate in December 2022 heralding a new dawn to the sector. This was aimed at identifying innovative solutions to the sector's problems, and maximize the potential that exists in the sugar sector, while also facilitating the transformation of the national economy and rural livelihoods. The event drew participation of various stakeholders who included farmers, sugar millers, investors, the private sector, government agencies, innovators, research and academic institutions, development agencies, agro-dealers, financial institutions among others.

The symposium culminated with presentation of awards to the outstanding innovations in the industry. The focus areas for the awards ranged from soil nutrition, value addition, packaging and branding technologies, climate change adaptation and mitigation technologies as well as cost reduction technologies in sugarcane farming. The stakeholders resolved to make the symposium an annual event.

**Beatrice Odiwa, Assistant Director,**  
*Technical and Advisory Services Department, Sugar Directorate,*  
*Kenya*