



World Association of Beet and Cane Growers

NEWS FROM WABCG

MARCH 2026

EDITO



Last month, when Australian growers opened their magazine, **Australian Canegrowers**, they found a story about a French sugar beet farmer. At the very same time, in France, readers of **Le Betteravier Français** discovered the portrait of an Australian grower.

This simple but powerful exchange did not happen by chance. It was launched by the WABCG. Around ten member associations answered the call to share their articles, so that our members could get to know one another better. Every month, journalists from our organizations will now exchange stories — real portraits from the field — and publish them in their own pages. The goal is clear: to know each other better. But also to show our members why the WABCG matters. And to give younger growers a taste for international cooperation. This is the true role of the WABCG: to keep dialogue alive. In today's heated global climate, opening a newspaper often means reading about new tensions between countries and peoples. At our level, we choose a different path. Let our magazines become open windows onto the world of beet and cane growers.

Thank you to all WABCG members who took part in this initiative. May this promising project have a long life!

Owen Menkens, President WABCG



Up: Australian article in *Le Betteravier français*
Down: French article in *Canegrowers Australia*



WABCG meeting
16-18 June 2026
Helsingborg, Sweden

Program & registration now available
Ask to Secretariat!

The World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) is the international organisation which groups together the national and regional associations of sugar beet and sugar cane growers at international level. WABCG has 37 member associations and unites over 5 million sugar beet and sugar cane growers from the five continents. WABCG is present in over 30 countries, producing 60% of world sugar production.



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NEWS FROM COLOMBIA

Sugar cane producers in Colombia have been affected by changes in the geostrategic landscape, turbulence in international markets, currency instability, climate variability, declining consumption and the sustained fall in sugar prices over the last year.

In addition, our country faces challenges in terms of physical security due to rising crime rates and increased labour costs as a result of the government's decision to raise the minimum wage by 23%, at a time when the harvested area fell from 180,000 hectares in 2024 to 177,000 hectares in 2025, and a decline in sugar yield from 10.5% to 10%, highlighting a sustained decrease over the last three years. Fortunately, the increase in cane production per hectare from 114 to 124 tonnes in 2025 has been a relief.



COMPARATIVO Productividad		Procaña			
DETALLE	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Área Cosechada (ha)	175.096	186.501	180.222	177.073	
Corte Mecánico %	67%	70%	77%	81%	
Corte Manual %	33%	30%	23%	19%	
Caña Molida (ton)	22.372.630	20.885.961	22.134.012	22.868.296	
Azúcar producida (ton)	2.380.347	2.195.484	2.283.674	2.319.542	
TCH	118	102	114	124	
TCHM	8,7	8,2	9,2	9,5%	
Rendimiento Promedio	10,6	10,7	10,5	10,0	
Edad Cortes (meses)	13,9	12,63	12,37	13,14	
Etanol (millones de lt)	347	328	406	360	
Lluvia (mm)	1.659	1.261	1.215	1.646	

Fuente: Centralía y Asocaña. Preparó: Procaña

It is important to note the 29% increase in rainfall compared to 2024. This scenario occurs in a highly mechanised process, in which more than 80% of the harvest is carried out mechanically, which, under conditions of higher humidity and excessive rainfall, poses additional challenges in terms of operating and maintenance costs, harvest logistics, vine life and preservation of raw material quality.

Another concern for the stability of the sector is the increase in bioethanol imports for domestic consumption, which makes inventory levels unsustainable and threatens to halt production. This runs counter to the national energy basket, puts thousands of rural jobs at risk, affects the competitiveness of the sector and the country's decarbonisation commitments.

Without a doubt, 2026 is a challenging year for Colombian sugarcane producers. On the political front, there will be two electoral processes: one in March for the election of Congress, the first round of the presidential election in May, and the second round in June, which adds tension to the situation.

This is an opportune moment to announce that after 23 years as part of PROCAÑA, the time has come for a change in my life plan, a transition towards retirement that I begin with deep gratitude in my heart for belonging to an organisation that allowed me to apply my knowledge, learn, grow and develop as a professional and as a person.

During the annual members' meeting to be held on 14 May, I will deliver the management report and introduce the person who will take over as executive director of the association.

I would like to thank the WABCG, Timothé, and each and every one of the people who have served on the board of directors. It has been a true honour to share challenges, events and knowledge. I admire the WABCG's commitment to promoting cooperation among sugar cane and beet farmers around the world.

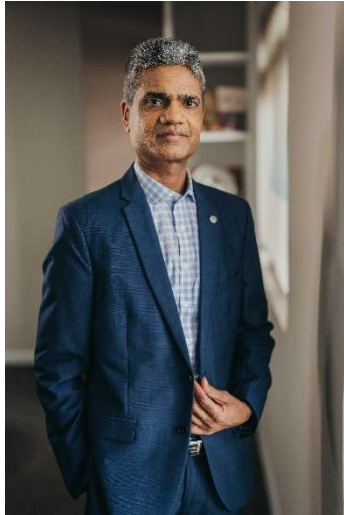
You will always have a special place in my heart, and I treasure your sincere friendship and unconditional support.

**Martha Betancourt, Executive Manager
Procaña (Asociación Colombiana de Productores y Proveedores de Caña de Azúcar), Colombia**



NEWS FROM MAURITIUS

We are again facing dire market conditions, with world sugar prices having plummeted to 5-year lows.



The raw sugar #11 at less than US 15 cts/lb is simply unsustainable for most producers globally, especially for export-orientated sugar industries. Although a price decline could be foreseen after 2 consecutive years – 2023 and 2024 – of remunerative levels, as producers got enticed to growing more beet or cane, or enhancing crystallization capacity, such value destruction, especially the speed at which it occurred – at least 30% year-over-year - had not been anticipated. As a small producer, with resources which are both limited and increasingly costly, Mauritius faces such market distortion head-on.

While the global market should theoretically have rewarded productivity, quality and responsiveness to demand – key principles adopted by our industry - unfortunately there is seldom a level playing field. Differences in regulatory frameworks, production standards, market definitions, and enforcement capacity create structural imbalances, which often emerge from fragmented governance and uneven alignment across jurisdictions.

A level playing field is constructed through good governance, coordination and shared responsibility. It requires stronger cooperation, clearer standards and sustained institutional engage-

ment. Competing with integrity remains the most durable strategy in markets that are constantly evolving, and it depends on a collective commitment to clarity and transparency. Producers must maintain discipline, with regards to quality systems, certification and compliance. Regulators must enforce standards consistently. Institutions must provide coordination and dialogue. Buyers must value integrity over short-term arbitrage.

In markets characterized by volatility, changing consumer expectations and increasing regulatory scrutiny, competitiveness is increasingly determined by differentiation, credibility and consistency. In this regard, the Mauritius sugar industry has undertaken thorough industrial reforms some 15 years ago to reinforce its export resilience, namely through a complete shift to the production of differentiated and high value-added sugars while complying with quality / food safety systems and sustainability standards.

It is not surprising that smaller producing systems are closer to their value chains. This proximity enables faster coordination, clearer accountability and a more direct relationship between strategic intent and operational execution. When governance structures are coherent and incentives are aligned, smaller systems can respond more decisively to evolving market requirements. They can invest selectively in standards that matter, engage more closely with buyers, and protect the integrity of their sugars in ways that are difficult to replicate on a larger scale.

It should be recalled that commodity markets have also become more complex over time. Price volatility, supply chain disruption and shifting policy frameworks have reduced the predictability that large volumes once guaranteed. At the same time, buyers, especially in mature markets, are no longer evaluating





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products on price alone. Requirements around traceability, food safety, sustainability and origin are now embedded in procurement decisions. These are no longer optional differentiators but are increasingly *sine qua non* for market entry.

Differentiation also allows producers to compete in segments where trust and provenance matter more than price alone. It stifles the commodity price elasticity of the past. In these segments, credibility is cumulative — built over time through consistent delivery rather than sporadic success. Differentiation is not only a marketing exercise, but a strategic decision that influences how an entire value chain is organized, governed and managed. Effective differentiation rests on several interdependent elements, namely (i) clarity of product identity, including origin and characteristics that are both verifiable and meaningful to buyers; (ii) consistency of quality, which requires disciplined production and processing; (iii) credibility of standards, supported by recognized certifications and transparent compliance mechanisms; and (iv) reliability of supply, even in periods of market stress.

Due to its capacity constraints and rising production costs, Mauritius has had no other choice than to adopt this differentiated and customer-orientated approach. This has necessitated long-term alignment between growers, processors, marketers, and institutions responsible for governance. As a small producer, the Mauritius sugar industry has a strong interest in contributing to governance frameworks that preserve trust and ensure fair competition. In so doing, it reinforces market integrity while protecting long-term value for both producers and buyers.

**Devesh Dukhira, CEO,
Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, Mauritius**

NEWS FROM NORTH GERMANY

Dry and largely mild weather conditions from mid-March onwards allowed for an early and rapid sowing campaign. By the end of March, most of the sugar beets in northern Germany had been sowed. The young



plants developed well despite a very dry spring. However, the lack of moisture posed a challenge for the effective performance of soil-applied herbicides. Following the withdrawal of *Trisulfuron* (Safari), adapted herbicide mixtures were required. The rainfall from July onwards was urgently needed to promote further beet growth. At the same time, the humid summer weather led to an early outbreak of *Cercospora* leaf spot, which was, however, effectively controlled. In

addition, significant aphid infestations were observed in some areas during spring and early summer. Consequently, many fields showed patches of yellowing later in the autumn, though these had no major impact on yields.

Harvesting, logistics, and processing of the beets began in early September and proceeded smoothly overall, supported by favourable weather conditions. With an average beet yield of more than 80 tonnes per hectare and sugar content over 18 percent, harvest results were well above the five-year average. The high sugar content clearly justifies the campaign's conclusion: "like candy in the field." Despite the excellent harvest, the situation on the sugar market remains tense. Sugar prices are currently at a low level, comparable to 2018, while production costs have risen significantly, particularly due to higher energy and fertilizer prices. As a result, the profitability of sugar beet cultivation is increasingly under pressure. Thanks to the high sugar content, beet growers can still expect cost-covering prices for the recent harvest.



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However, further price cuts are anticipated for the coming season due to the currently weak market situation. Additional pressure caused by low-cost imports from third countries, free trade agreements, and increasing restrictions in plant protection, all of which threaten the competitiveness of domestic sugar beet production.

All these issues were discussed at more than 30 growers meetings where almost 2,000 members respectively 40 percent of the total number took the opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues and learn about the latest developments in beet cultivation. Key topics included the processing campaign, sustainability, sugar market, and economic viability of sugar beet production. Considering negative financial forecasts for sugar companies, cost-saving measures were also important issues of the discussions.

All these challenges make it necessary to keep sugar beet cultivation fit for the future. That is why grower associations participate in a wide range of research and development activities. The range extends from laser-based weed control to improved water-use efficiency and minimizing nitrogen fertilizer losses. The agronomic challenge is to implement these new methods without compromising sugar



yields and increasing production costs.

Alongside scientific projects and advisory activities, attracting young beet growers to work within the growers' associations is important as well. For this goal, we support a working group that promotes personal development for vol-

untary engagement in agricultural organizations. Young farmers gain leadership skills, social competencies, and professional expertise. In addition, association staff visit agricultural schools to speak with students about sugar beet cultivation and the function of the beet growers' associations.

Through all these approaches, we aim to help secure the future of sugar beet production in our area as a sustainable business for arable farmers.

Yours sincerely

**Dr. Heinrich-Hubertus Helmke, General Secretary
Head Association of North German Sugar Beet Growers
(DNZ), Germany**



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NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

Global sugar prices are sliding and hurting growers everywhere. In Australia, where we are fully exposed to the world market, the impact is felt immediately at the farm gate. For many growers, returns are below the cost of production and cash flow is under real strain. At the same time, input costs are more expensive than ever. Fuel, fertiliser, energy and water continue to rise. Managing those costs while maintaining productivity is creating genuine anxiety



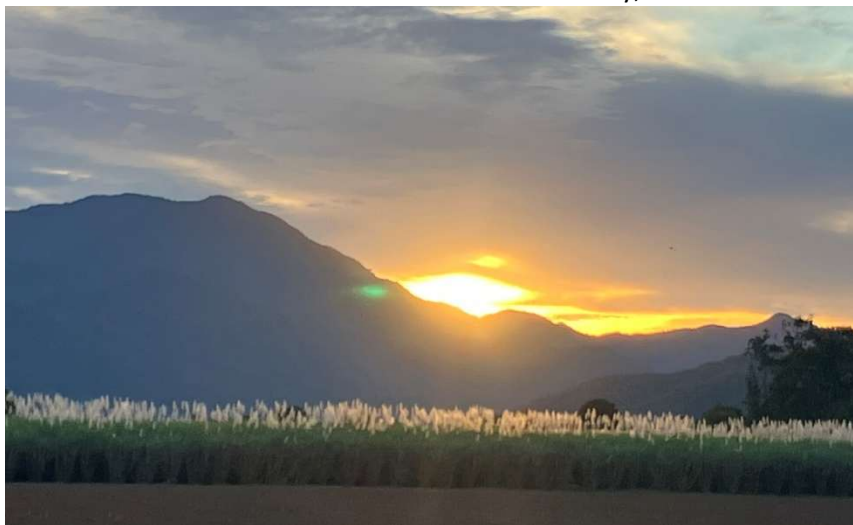
in many cane-growing communities.

Looking back, the 2024 season tested many districts. Weather disruptions affected yields and harvest conditions. Mill performance improved compared with previous years, although the smaller crop played a significant role in allowing an earlier finish to the crush. Workforce pressures, reliability issues and rising operating costs across harvesting and milling remain ongoing challenges.

On a positive note, the earlier finish has given the 2025 crop a strong start.

Weather has generally been favourable, allowing plant and ratoon crops to become well established before the rainy season set in. While we remain in cyclone season, conditions so far have been kind. If that continues, we could see a much larger crop this year. That would be welcomed by growers, but it will also place pressure on milling capacity and harvesting logistics.

Within the industry, discussions continue around governance arrangements for the industry-owned marketer QSL and the operation of Queensland's bulk sugar terminals. These are important conversations



aimed at ensuring marketing and infrastructure remain efficient and aligned with grower interests in a highly competitive export market.

Sustainability also continues to be of growing importance to market access. The industry-led best management practice program Smartcane BMP is now aligned with both VIVE and Bonsucro, strengthening recognition of Australian production standards internationally. Just last month, a shipment of sugar produced from Smartcane-accredited cane and processed at VIVE-accredited MSF Sugar mills sailed from Cairns Port to a buyer in Japan. Those sustainability credentials were central to the shipment, reflecting the increasing importance of traceability and independently recognised standards in global trade.

The industry has also released a cane-specific greenhouse gas emissions calculator. It is a practical tool that helps growers better understand on-farm emissions and respond to evolving market expectations.

Domestically, attention is also focused on renewable

fuels policy. A Parliamentary Inquiry into a sugarcane-based biofuels industry in Queensland is nearing completion. Growers have argued strongly for a greater role for sugarcane in ethanol and bioenergy, and the final recommendations are expected shortly.

Finally, 2026 marks **100 years of organised grower representation through CANEGROWERS**. It is a reminder of the generations of farming families who have built and sustained Australia's cane industry – many of them migrants from Europe who brought farming traditions that still shape our cane regions today.

Conditions remain tough, but growers continue to focus on productivity, sustainability and building resilience for the long term.

**Owen Menkens, Chair
CANEGROWERS, Australia**