



World Association of  
Beet and Cane Growers



## NEWS FROM WABCG

APRIL 2025

### EDITORIAL

As I write this Edito, almost 60 of you from 16 different countries have already registered for our next Council in Cairns next June! It must be said that our Australian colleague from Canegrowers has prepared a fantastic programme.



During our two days of meetings we will focus on our fundamentals: first, economics, with a session on how best to price a cane or beet, and another dedicated to geopolitics and trade.

Diversification and innovation will be covered in two sessions, with examples mainly from Australia - including SAF (*Sustainable Aviation Fuel*), which is on everyone's lips! And a focus on sugar-cane cultivation in neighbouring countries - Thailand, Philippines and Fiji - will allow us to travel even further...

We will conclude our working session with a field visit, which will take us to farms around Cairns - just after we have elected our new Board for the next three years!

There are only a few days left to register if you want to join us: go on! It will be a fabulous event!

**David Thompson, President  
WABCG**

### NEWS FROM KENYA

The Act was assented to by the President of Kenya on November 1st, 2024, and commenced on November 21st, 2024. The long awaited Act is officially referred to as "*The Sugar Act, 2024*".

It aims to develop, regulate and promote the Kenyan sugar industry, establishing the Kenya Sugar Board with specific powers and functions. Previously, these functions were being handled by the Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA).

Likewise, The Kenya Sugar Research and Training Institute will assume the sugar research functions that



were previously under the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO).

The Act provided for a levy "Sugar Development Fund" applicable to both domestically produced and imported sugar, aimed at bolstering the local sugar industry through funding of Cane Development, Infrastructure Maintenance, Research and support to Out grower Institutions.

The sugar industry is in a period of transition with several milestones to achieve including Drafting the Sugar Industry Regulations 2025 and constitution of a Board with representation of Millers and Growers.

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



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## NEWS FROM JAPAN

In 2024, Japan's sugar beet achieved a yield of 71.3 tons per hectare and a sugar content of 15.7%, marking the highest yield in two years. In 2023 and 2022, high temperatures and prolonged rainfall during the summer led to a major outbreak of *Cercospora*, resulting in low yields. However, in 2024, we were able to reduce the damage because of the increase in the number of sprayings by thoroughly implementing the early spraying. Regarding sugar content, the results were lower than average due to higher temperatures throughout the growing season and the occurrence of *Cercospora*.

In recent years, the risk of disease occurrence has increased by high temperatures in summer and it's leading to increased effort and costs for spraying.

Therefore, we are working on devising the spraying methods and

early introduction of the disease resistant varieties and we're also hopeful for the development of new agricultural chemicals.

On the other hand, fertilizer prices remain high, and its costs are also enormous. As part of those measures, we are further promoting appropriate fertilization based on soil analysis and utilizing the latest technologies such as variable fertilization.

Moreover, in recent years direct sowing is rapidly increasing due to the influence of the good initial growth of sugar beet by the high temperature in early spring and the labour-saving and low-cost cultivation. Direct sowing lacks the stability of productivity compared to the traditionally mainstream transplantation sowing, but cost reduction is expected to increase more in the future. In this situation, we believe it is important to secure the cultivation area for sugar beets, so we are working on stabilizing the productivity of direct sowing.

Also, we have been striving for efficiency in the transportation of sugar beet. In response to the government-led labor reforms in the logistics industry aimed at improving the working environment, we are adjusting the transportation system to shorten the delivery time of sugar beets. Specifically, we are working to create an environment where larger vehicles can operate to achieve transport efficiency through vehicle enlargement, and we are also making efforts to utilize IT technology to address the aging population and the shortage of successors that have become prominent in the transportation industry.

The area of sugar beet cultivation in Hokkaido is showing a decreasing trend due to the national sugar

beet production reduction policy, rising prices of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, recent global warming leading to instability in sugar beet productivity by climatic changes, and a labor shortage

associated with aging. However, sugar is an important food for the diet, a significant crop in Hokkaido's agricultural rotation system, and the sugar industry is a vital component of the regional economy. Therefore, regions, producers, and sugar companies are working together to secure the cultivated area of sugar beets and ensure the production volume of sugar.

**Soshi KAWASAKI, Sugar Beet & Seed Section**  
**Sugar Beet Production Division, HOKUREN Federation of**  
**Agricultural Cooperatives, Japan**



## NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

The past 12 months have been a mixed bag for Australia's sugarcane industry, with some bright spots, some frustrations, and a few hard lessons along the way.

Across Queensland's cane-growing regions, growers have had to contend with a smaller crop, workforce challenges, an extended season, and widespread flooding.

But there's also been progress on innovation, education, and on building stronger connections across the whole sugar supply chain.



### Sugar Cubed

A highlight of the year was *Sugar Cubed*, the new industry-wide conference hosted by CANEGROWERS and launched in May 2024. Rather than being just another event on the calendar, it sparked fresh discussions about where the industry is headed and how we get there.

There was a strong focus on the future, with conversations around what a sugarcane-based sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry might look like, how to make farming more profitable, and how Australia's sustainably produced sugar can access more global markets.

At the same time, the conference tackled more immediate issues like farm productivity, milling reliability, and how to better connect growers, researchers, and policymakers.

The positive response means *Sugar Cubed* is back in 2025, with a new theme – *Growth for Generations*. It's a nod to the long-term view the industry is taking, and the importance of supporting the next wave of growers, leaders, and innovators.

### 2024 Harvest

From the outset, the 2024 season wasn't expected to be a bumper one, with a below average crop of just 28.5 million tonnes forecast. However, strong global sugar prices offered some relief, softening the financial blow of a smaller harvest.

Even so, the season proved difficult. The crush dragged on far longer than planned, with many districts still operating deep into December and a few into January which means harvest and crush during our wet season. Wet weather, labour shortages, industrial disputes and poor milling performance across a number of districts all played a role in the delays.

In the end, the industry only managed to crush around 27.3 million tonnes – leaving over a million tonnes of cane unharvested. That's the equivalent of an entire mill area left in the paddock.

For growers, it was a frustrating finish to a year that had already tested their patience and resilience. The delays also complicated planting schedules and cash flow planning, adding further pressure as they looked to the next season.

### Flooding impacts on 2025

Just when things seemed to be settling down, the wet season arrived with a bang. Flooding in early 2025 hit parts of North Queensland hard, damaging paddocks and pushing some growers right back into recovery mode.

Replanting, in particular, became a major focus. While recovery packages have helped get the clean-up started, many growers found themselves dipping into their financial reserves to restore paddocks and re-establish crops. Industry organisations like CANEGROWERS pushed hard for increased disaster recovery funding, and eventually secured a boost in grants to support primary producers through the recovery phase. But it's not a quick fix. For plenty of growers, the clean-up is still ongoing. Rebuilding takes time, and the cumulative effect of multiple tough seasons is beginning to show.

### Investing in the next generation

Amid all the operational challenges, there were some highlights. In March, CANEGROWERS rolled out a new suite of sugarcane education resources to Queensland classrooms, offering students a chance to learn more about how sugarcane is grown, processed, and used.

The aim is simple – to help kids understand the industry that underpins so many regional communities and maybe spark a bit of curiosity along the way. From the science of growing cane to the jobs involved in getting sugar from paddock to packet, the program is part of



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a broader push to connect the next generation with agriculture.

It's also about building long-term understanding and appreciation for the role sugarcane plays in Australia's food system, economy, and environmental landscape.

#### **What next?**

Looking back, the past year has been far from easy. But it's also been a reminder of what the industry does well – adapting, advocating, and working together to solve problems as they arise.

There's still plenty of work ahead on improving milling performance, managing seasonal labour shortages, overcoming challenges in the harvesting sector, and making sure government policy keeps pace with the real-world needs of growers.

There's no doubt that the industry is operating in a more complex environment than ever. But with better collaboration, smarter planning, and a willingness to keep evolving, Australian sugarcane has a solid foundation to build on.

A bright spark on the horizon will be when host the WABCG forum in Cairns from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of June. We really cannot wait to see everyone down under and share our story with you and meet to discuss the opportunities in our great industry.

***Owen Menkens, President  
Canegrowers, Australia***



**Save the dates!**

**WABCG Council**

23-26 June 2025

Cairns, Australia

*Contact us to register!*

**WABCG/ISO Consultation**

1<sup>st</sup> December 2025

London, United-Kingdom



**Check our website!**





## NEWS FROM MOROCCO

In recent years, Morocco has experienced a marked drop in rainfall, which has had a considerable impact on the availability of water resources, both in dams and in groundwater. These climate changes are having a major impact on the agricultural sector as a whole, and on the sugar industry in particular. Faced with these challenges, and with a view to ensuring food resilience, the Cosumar Group has included several initiatives in its research and development programme aimed at promoting precision agriculture. These are based on advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), drones and intelligent irrigation systems. The aim of these projects is to optimise the management of crops and water resources, guaranteeing more efficient and sustainable production.



Irrigation control is based on advanced models that go far beyond a simple calculation of evapotranspiration. It relies on climate data, soil characteristics and sugar beet growth trends to optimise water supply. To achieve this, high-precision solutions are put in place, including drip irrigation and the use of soil moisture sensors, pressure sensors and size sensors to monitor the development of the sugar plants. These systems are complemented by decision-support algorithms, enabling the amount of water applied to be adjusted according to the actual needs of the plant.

Thanks to this approach, irrigation becomes more efficient, limiting losses while adapting to weather conditions. The aim is to ensure optimum development of the sugar plant while preserving water resources.

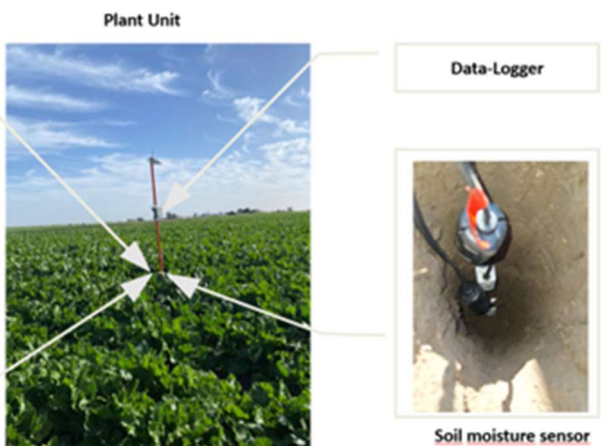
The integration of intelligent irrigation combined with drip irrigation has made it possible to optimise water management through a number of actions:



Tuber Size sensor



Water Pressure sensor



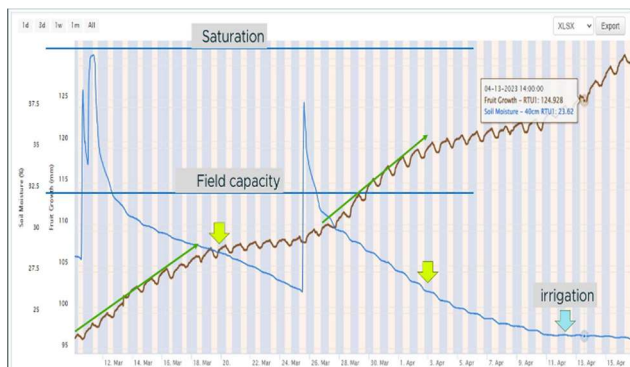
- Setting up an irrigation calendar that takes into account the optimum soil moisture threshold for the plant.
- Adapting irrigation to prevent the effects of heat waves.
- Adjusting the irrigation schedule to take account of low rainfall.
- Development of an irrigation service tailored to crop needs.
- Sending alerts and recommendations in the event of extreme weather conditions.
- Detection and reporting of water shortage situations.

Intelligent drip irrigation has shown that irrigation that is too deep does not necessarily promote better growth, compared with irrigation targeted at the active root zone (up to 40 cm for sugar beet). In addition, it offers the following key benefits:

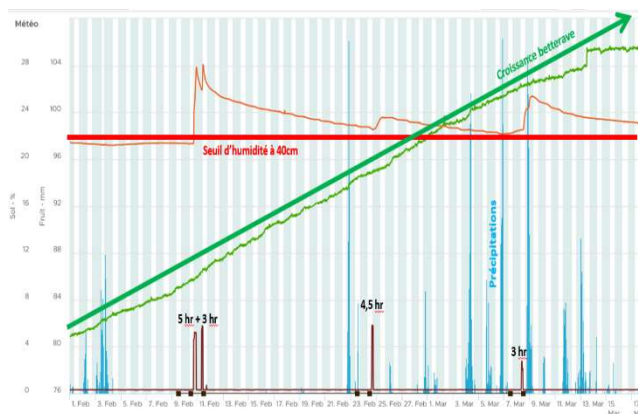
- Precise determination of optimum moisture levels for effective irrigation.
- Rigorous calculation of water requirements in terms of quantity and frequency.
- Reduces water consumption by up to 30%, thus reducing wastage.
- Improved vegetative growth and root development thanks to appropriate weekly irrigation.
- Optimised irrigation costs with reduced water and energy consumption.
- Reduced labour costs thanks to increased automation.



The very encouraging results of the pilot trials pave the way for large-scale deployment of smart irrigation solutions. This expansion will primarily target regions suffering from water stress, where optimising water use is crucial to ensuring sustainable crop yields.



Example of irregular irrigation with soil moisture levels below the tolerated threshold, causing a slowdown in plant growth.



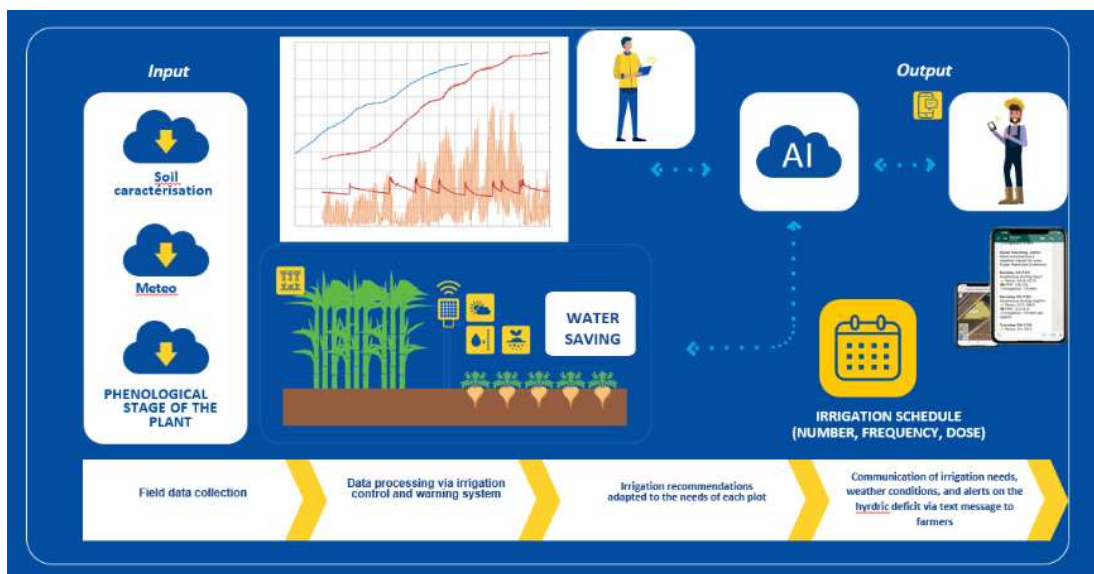
Example of regular irrigation, with the right dose at the right time, to encourage good vegetative growth.

The aim is to improve productivity in the sugar industry by reducing water stress and ensuring better plant health.

The transition to optimised irrigation management will primarily involve the widespread use of intelligent drip irrigation. However, to ensure widespread and effective adoption of these technologies, it will be essential to build the capacity of players in the sector through targeted efforts in training, funding and infrastructure.

An in-depth study will be carried out to identify the optimal economic model and the most appropriate funding mechanisms to ensure the effective and sustainable adoption of smart irrigation.

**Leïla Dziri, Director of innovation, R&D  
FIMASUCRE, Morocco**



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 36 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.