



CANEGROWERS



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CANEGROWERS Mackay hails the End of Crush for 2025

It will be the first time in five years that all growers in Mackay and Plane Creek milling areas will have all been finished harvesting at Christmas time, Mackay Canegrowers Chairman Joseph Borg is pleased to say.

"It will be a great relief to growers that we will be having Christmas on the verandah, and not behind the harvester controls," he said.

Despite that strong positive, it has still been a long season, starting a little earlier than optimal for the crop, and running beyond the optimal 22-week window for best CCS, within the dry season from late June to mid- November.

CCS typically reduces under the influence of heat and/or wet conditions, reducing profitability for growers and millers.

"Many growers have observed that CCS has crashed a little earlier than in recent years," said Joseph Borg.

Both milling areas had experienced a reduction from initial crop estimates as the season progressed, as it became clear that late cut or standover cane from the 2024 harvest was under-performing.

"This has been the smallest crop in Mackay since 2018, and one of the lowest in a decade," said Joseph Borg. "Yet the seasons have grown longer in general."

"Acknowledging the improvement in crush duration this year, and a small improvement in factory performance, we must say that this was counteracted by failures in transport logistics.

"Millers do need to continue to invest in improvements to rectify this situation and get back to a reasonable season length."

Joseph Borg said that the sugar price dropping 30 percent of its value in recent times, further challenging profitability for growers.

"For some growers, that significant drop will place sugar price below their cost-of-production. This challenge to grower profitability makes it even more important for millers to rectify season length and their performance across cane transport and milling," he said.

He reminded growers to look to CANEGROWERS products like the cost-of-production tool, and discussion with their sugar marketer to help build business resilience.

Racecourse Mill crushed-out Wednesday evening 10 December; Farleigh Mill crushed-out Saturday morning 13 December. All of Mackay Sugar's remaining cane will be loaded into bins on the rail line, ready for pick-up by 4:00 pm today (Monday, 15 December 2025). Marian Mill will operate throughout the night to crush remaining crop.

This brings Mackay Sugar's crushing season to 27-weeks.

Wilmar Plane Creek had crushed out at dawn on Friday 28 November, with the miller reporting 1.33 million tonnes of cane processed, with a provisional season CCS of 13.9. The crush there was also 26 weeks in duration, with calls from Plane Creek Chairman to bring the crushing back to a 22-week window.

"We started very early, on 6 June, and sacrificed sugar make. At that time of the year, CCS is very low. Those wet conditions did some damage to soils in the paddocks, as we booged getting cane out of the paddock," Kevin Borg said.

"The ideal is a 22-week crushing, and we used to be able to do that. A 1.3 million tonne crop is not a really big crop.

"Investment in Plane Creek Mill is a little bit lacking, also factory performance has been a little better this year compared to recent years, but the tramline system has been quite atrocious."

"Crush rates were not optimal, so these all worked together to slow the season in Plane Creek."

Grower and millers now move into maintenance season, with hopes for a good 2026 crop.