

NEWSLETTER

Issue 10

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Recent Events

The Regenerative Cane Farming Forum was held in Cairns on the 15th and 16th February. Several representatives from the Burdekin Cane community attended, including BBIFMAC staff. Sugar Research Australia (SRA) and Burdekin Productivity Services (BPS) took up a group of growers from the Soil Health Project and others from the Burdekin and Herbert regions who were interested in different regenerative farming practices.



Attendees visited the Rossi farm to hear about their experience in growing peanut break crops.

Photo provided by Jai Kaartinen-Price (SRA).

The two days consisted of several farm visits which focused on many aspects of a regenerative farming approach, including mixed cover crops, composting, soil health, and revegetation. Although each farm is unique and there is no single recipe for implementing regenerative practices in cane, four main take away points were evident from the farm visits – controlled traffic, minimum tillage, minimising bare fallows, and diversity in cover crops are essential to soil health and as important as good nutrient management.

The forum was a great opportunity for growers, extension officers and industry representatives to network and share their experiences.

Meet the BBIFMAC Committee



Now that we have introduced the BBIFMAC staff, we would like to take this opportunity to introduce one of the BBIFMAC Committee members with each newsletter. In this issue we introduce Steve Attard.

Steve Attard is the Chair of the BBIFMAC Management Committee. Steve works locally in the agricultural sector as the Managing Director of AgriTech Solutions, where his expertise includes irrigation management, sugarcane cropping systems, productivity, and natural resource management.



BBIFMAC

Managing Natural Resources to ensure Social Wellbeing, Primary Production and Ecological Sustainability.

Black Sesame Summer Spice Trial



The second year of the black sesame spice trial is well underway in the Burdekin region after promising results in the first year trials. The spice trial is being conducted as part of the Spicing up the North project with Central Queensland University (CQU). The funding is provided by the Cooperative Research Centre for Northern Australia (CRCNA).

The second year trial involves larger scale (0.5-1 hectare) black sesame crops in six regions across Northern Australia, including Rockhampton, Biloela, Ayr, Tully, Darwin and Katherine.

The black sesame crop was planted locally at two sites in the Burdekin in early December 2020 under the guidance of Surya Bhattarai, who travelled up from CQU in Rockhampton to loan the participating farmers the appropriate seed planter and oversee the technicalities.

The aim of the spice trials is to evaluate the potential for future commercialisation of black sesame in Northern Australia, as part of a broader spice development program which is also assessing fennel, caraway, cumin, kalijiri and kalonji for their suitability to large-scale production.

BBIFMAC staff spoke with Peter Papadimitriou, one of the Burdekin's participating farmers for the black sesame trial, to gain some insight into what motivated him to be involved in the project.



The black sesame crop at Peter Papadimitriou's farm in the Horseshoe Lagoon area is a 0.6 hectare trial area.



Peter Papadimitriou's black sesame crop, 2 months after planting.

The crop has started to flower and seed pods are developing.

Q & A with Peter Papadimitriou

Participating farmer, black sesame spice trial



Peter Papadimitriou, one of the participating farmers in the Burdekin for the black sesame spice trial as part of the North Australia Spice Trial with CQU.

1. Tell us a bit about your background in the local area.

I worked with my Mum and Dad on the family farm in the Horseshoe Lagoon area, growing predominantly vegetables and also some cane until 2005-2006.

I now grow cane and legumes (as a fallow crop) on the property, but have been interested in growing spices for a number of years.
2. What motivated you to participate in the black sesame spice trial?

I think it is important to start considering ways to diversify out of growing cane, particularly due to the current sugar prices. The fact that sesame and other spices have a short crop cycle means I can get cash for the crop within 30 days compared to the 24 month return on cane. It is an attractive opportunity for income diversification.
3. What long term prospects or future intentions do you have in regards to growing spice, in particular black sesame?

I would like to incorporate the black sesame crop in my summer fallow cash crop rotations by planting it following a bean crop.

The crop at Peter's farm is progressing well, and we look forward to providing further information and updates over the coming months.

Thankyou Peter for your time in answering these questions, and for your willingness to participate in the trial.

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