

# CURRENT CROP FACTS

Mossman Mill's total cane production area is over 16,500 hectares. It stretches from Daintree in the north to Mowbray in the south and as far west as Atherton on the Atherton Tablelands.

The Mossman and Julatten areas are the traditional growing areas for the mill and the following facts relate to these areas.

The mill is supplied by 190 farms, operated by 65 growers. The largest farm is 436 hectares and the smallest is 5 hectares. The average farm size is 107 hectares.

The Mossman district receives a varied annual average rainfall. Mowbray, the most southern cane growing area receives approximately 1,600 mm, Mossman township receives approximately 2,400 mm, whilst Daintree in the north receives approximately 4,000 mm. All cane is grown without irrigation.



The average production for farms on the coast is approximately 80 tonnes of cane per hectare. Growers are paid per tonne of cane, according to the sugar content. The price in recent years has hovered around the \$25 mark. The price that is quoted on the radio and television is normally a price for sugar, not sugar cane.

Approximately 95% of cane in the Mossman region is cut green. Crops are only burnt if they are particularly tangled and difficult to harvest, or as a means of removing excess trash from the paddock if the old crop is to be ploughed out and replanted.

A single crop of cane takes a full year to reach maturity. After harvest the cane root section (*stool*) is fertilized and will re-grow (*ratoon*) for next year's crop. On average, a crop of cane will last approximately 5 years before it has to be ploughed out and replanted.

There are approximately 20 different varieties of cane growing in the Mossman region. Some are better suited to certain conditions and soils than others, and over time some become susceptible to disease and lose their quality. New varieties of cane are constantly being developed.

A crop of cane flowers in early May through June. Flowering is not an indication of plant maturity, it is simply a varietal characteristic. Some varieties rarely flower.



Different varieties of cane produce the same finished product; however, some varieties contain more sugar than others. Growers are paid according to the weight and sugar content of their crop. Sugar content is referred to as CCS which is the abbreviation of Commercial Cane Sugar.

Sugar cane is a heavy feeder of nutrients and uses some 20 kg of phosphorus, 120 kg of potash and 120 to 180 kg of nitrogen per hectare, depending on the variety or soil type.