

## NEWS RELEASE



### Focus on quality cane for now & for the future

20th of October 2020

Sugar quality is a high priority for both Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) and the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF). The two bodies work together to help growers get quality green cane to the mill for sugar production, resulting in higher quality sugar that is in greater demand internationally.

At the growing stage of cane production, The Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF) is instrumental in assisting with soil analysis. At the SRIF Analytical laboratory, analysis is conducted, and the fertility status of the soil is determined. Following the analysis, SRIF informs the farmers of the nutrient levels they need to apply on their farm to get optimum cane production.

But a healthy, strong crop is only the start. Following crop growth, some farmers continue to burn their cane; this has a detrimental impact on the cane's quality and requires extra chemicals and treatment in processing, also negatively impacting the soil quality for future crops.

Mr. Prema Naidu, Acting Chief Executive of Sugar Research Institute of Fiji, based in Drasa, commented on the impacts of burnt cane “Burnt cane poses a lot of problems for the sugar industry. It reduces the quality of the cane. It causes a lot of problems in the milling. The milling cost, and the cost of production of sugar goes up when cane is burnt.”



**Above:** Mr Prema Naidu, Actg. CEO of Sugar Research Institute of Fiji

Core contributors to the increased processing cost are the additives required to extract the sugar from the burnt cane. “When processing the burnt cane, more additives are required to match the same Sugar Recovery. Normally, when the sugarcane is burnt, the cane starts deteriorating soon after burning.”



The burning of cane causes an increase in Dextran level, which requires extra chemical treatment and makes the cane both hard and costlier to process.

Additionally, the burnt cane creates more polysaccharides, making the crystallisation process hard; thus, additives are required to rectify this.

Mr. Naidu explained that “during the burning of the cane, a thin layer of wax that is present on the cane stalk is destroyed, leaving the cane exposed and at risk of being negatively impacted by bacteria. This bacteria not only causes deterioration, but it also accelerates the deterioration process- meaning the quality of the cane keeps going down, and the juice quality also deteriorates.”

Both organisations encourage farmers to deliver green cane so that quality can be maintained, and more sugar can be extracted from the cane grown and delivered to the mills.

The effects of burning cane go beyond just the impact on sugar quality and yields – the environmental impacts and economic impacts must also be considered. The soil is impacted, and smoke is released into the air and atmosphere. Following burning, the soil also requires more fertiliser, impacting growth, and costing farmers more and more each year.

“My simple message would be – Do not burn. Harvest green. Harvest good quality cane. And we make good sugar. The farmers are paid on the sugar that we make. If the quality of the sugar is not good, the buyers don't want to buy that. And then, it again will impact the farmer's pockets. For good quality sugar, you get good money, and farmers will be paid well. So, that's the very top line message," said Mr. Naidu.

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