

NEWS RELEASE

2020 Season - Sugar Milling Update (Cane crushed to date passes 1.3 million tonnes.)

20 October, 2020



OVERVIEW

As of Monday 19th October 2020, the volume of cane crushed by the three FSC mills had reached 1,334,570 tonnes. Despite the continued heavy rains received during the past week, the cumulative crush to date is 4% higher than for the equivalent period in 2019, and compares to a tonnage of 1,287,751 tonnes crushed in the same period in 2019. Labasa mill has been worst affected by the heavy rains and this has resulted in its to date crush tonnage falling slightly below that of the equivalent period in 2019. The two Viti Levu mills have crushed more than for the same period last year – Lautoka 2% more and Rarawai 11% more.

Mill throughput and performance to date continues to be better than for the past two seasons, with average weekly mill stoppages 16% lower, driven by strong cane supply and mill breakdowns that are 20% lower than in 2019.

Sugar production of 119,520 tonnes to date was affected by rain impacted operations, and compares to production in the same period in 2019 of 125,196 tonnes. Sugar recoveries measured by the cumulative tonnes cane to sugar ratio (TCTS) remains at 11.2, still impacted by ongoing low cane purity, which to date is the lowest in three years. Cane purity has been adversely affected by weather, high extraneous matter in billet cane and continuing high levels of burnt cane deliveries compared to 2019.

The final bulk sugar export for 2020 will commence loading in Lautoka on 24th October 2020, after which the cargo of 30,000 tonnes of bulk raw sugar destined for the UK will be completed in Labasa. The bulk vessel will depart Fiji by month end.

Lautoka Mill

Rain continued from last week depressing the crushing rate mid week and completely halting Mill operations over the weekend. A total of 74 hours of rain stops were recorded while inside stops were 11 hours. During the week, issues were encountered with the Mill air compressors, diffuser drives, dewatering mills and chokes on the bagasse conveyors. As a result of the stop start nature of operations, cane throughput was 19,652 tonnes and the total sugar make for the week was 1,789 tonnes. Both were lower than target for the week, however, the TCTS of 11.0 units was in line with expectation, which indicated efforts were in place to maximize sugar recovery despite the fact that percent burnt cane received was 90.7%. The high extraneous matter in mechanically harvested cane continues to be highlighted as an issue affecting sugar processing. Cut to crush delays were minimized which resulted in a slight improvement in cane quality from last week.

Rarawai Mill

Rarawai mill operations were also affected by rain throughout the week and also came to a complete stand still over the weekend. A total of 67 hours of rain stops were recorded while inside stops were 12 hours for the week due to issues in the crushing, feeding and evaporator stations. As a result of the stop start nature of operations both cane crushed of 20,976 and the sugar make of 1,780 tonnes were lower than the target for the week. Purities in the past week were reduced, due to inferior cane quality and the rain effect. Percent burnt cane received at the mill is now 96.0%.

Labasa Mill

Labasa mill crushed 19,032 tonnes of cane and produced 1,813 tonnes of sugar with a TCTS ratio of 10.5 units for the week. Labasa has been impacted by continuous rain for four weeks, which has disrupted operations and caused a shortfall in crush and sugar make. The rain stops for the week were 86 hours. Inside stops were only 0.5 hours. Labasa mill has lost 273 hours of operation due to rain in the past 4 weeks. As a result of the stop start nature of operations and the rain, cane purity fell during the week. Percent burnt cane has increased to 70.6%. The operational disruption caused by the rain is negatively impacting the mill crushing program and is likely to extend crushing for the season by approximately one week.

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For more information, please contact:

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