

MEDIA RELEASE

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Initial ASA submission to Minister on forming Sugar Research Australia

The new era for Australian Sugar Industry research advanced this week with the initial Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASA) submission on forming an Industry Owned Company on its way to Senator Joe Ludwig, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in Canberra.

"This proposal, to form Sugar Research Australia with strong support from growers and millers, represents a big achievement for the whole industry", said ASA Chair Mr Alf Cristaudo. "I have been involved in sugar industry development for over two decades, and this is clearly a major turning point in modernisation and achieving high-performing, efficient and sustainable industry research."

"ASA is requesting support from Minister Ludwig around the formation of this new industry owned company in partnership with the Australian Government, and for a statutory levy to support Sugar Research Australia that CANEGROWERS and ASMC agree will be paid equally," said Mr Cristaudo.

"At this stage, after discussions around this submission, we are seeking in-principle support from the Minister, ahead of achieving wide industry levy-payer endorsement. This needs to be obtained through a formal Ballot in August, and all growers and millers will be encouraged to vote."

"This industry is undergoing significant changes and stronger, streamlined research, development and extension arrangements are needed to underpin future growth," said Mr Quinton Hildebrand Deputy Chair of ASA and Chair of the Australian Milling Council. "The Milling Council supports the formation of Sugar Research Australia, the statutory levy being paid equally by growers and millers along with the whole package of Sugar RD&E reforms."

The Board of BSES Ltd has endorsed the Sugar RD&E reform objectives and is progressing its restructuring towards transition into the proposed new company, Sugar Research Australia (SRA). A stable statutory levy at levels reasonable for industry participants will boost both research and researchers.

Under the envisaged company structure, the SRA Research Funding Panel will plan and manage a much larger competitive research pool and will be able to consider a wider range of R&D projects. Plant breeding and farm systems will be key research activities, and variety development and biosecurity will be R&D operational functions in SRA, along with the Professional Extension and Communications (PEC) Unit responsible for ensuring open access to all sugar research knowledge.

The ASA submission to Minister Ludwig is being distributed through the industry and is available on CANEGROWERS and ASMC websites. "The submission includes important approaches for balanced voting in levy ballots and at SRA company meetings. The next months will include definition and due diligence work that will go into detail around the proposed new company and BSES and SRDC. More information on changes will be available well before the planned SRA Ballot", Mr Cristaudo said.

The full Sugar RDE& Reform package including aspects of Sugar Research Australia will be discussed at the 15 'New Era for Sugar RD&E' industry meetings that will run from 12 March in Mareeba to 29 March in Ballina. Over one thousand growers and others are expected to attend these important industry meetings. Dates and locations will be advertised widely in the next weeks.

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