

SEARCH CRITERIA

Model	Model C: Technological Development Model
Industry	Sugar
Focus/Level	Industry
Purpose	Creating new knowledge/Improve productivity
Outcomes	Development of specific technologies
Special Interest Groups	Other
Design and Implementation	Designed and managed by extension and research with farmers

1. PROJECT NAME:

Cane Productivity Initiative/Prosper

2. FUNDERS:

CSR, BSES and SRDC

3. PROVIDERS:

BSES, CSR and Cane Productivity Board

4. KEY CONTACTS:

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5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:

CPI/Prosper is directed towards increased productivity and reduction of costs in the sugar cane industry. Although activities impact across Queensland, the focus of this is on the Burdekin, Herbert and Plane Creek districts.

6. PROJECT CONTEXT:

The Cane Productivity Initiative (CPI) resulted from a cross-industry workshop in June 2001 addressing concerns about the steady decline of productivity/profitability in the sugar industry. The McKinsey review which looked at the whole value chain was commissioned and undertaken between October 2001 and March 2002. The review concluded that there was scope to improve productivity by 20% by addressing a number of defined and prioritised areas across the value chain. A key outcome is to increase the district productivity. The CPI approach included the adoption of Best Management Practice (BMP) in cane growing and harvesting operations. Farmer-driven grower productivity groups were seen as a core component.

PROSPER is viewed as the BSES funded component to support and complement the CPI. Each district put in for specific projects under PROSPER funding. The Sugar Research and Development Corporation (SRDC) also contributes funds into

PROSPER. The Sugar Yield Decline Joint Venture funds research into farming systems which is relevant to the CPI/PROSPER.

Activities within the CPI/PROSPER program effectively commenced in April 2002.

7. PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):

The specific purpose of the CPI/Prosper is to increase the productivity and decrease costs in cane production across a broad range of technologies and management approaches. Its aim is to :

- Increase in cane production by 20% (on top of 1996 levels);
- Increase ccs by .75 units;
- Achieve results in three years; and to find
- Evidence of improvements in ccs and productivity at individual farm level as a result of new practices.

8. PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:

The CPI/Prosper has an underlying philosophy that grower groups can provide a core means of sharing information in the industry, motivating and supporting growers towards change. These meetings are strongly backed up by cross-industry research and development committees and on-farm trials.

9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:

In the order of 10 million dollars has been invested into this project over 5 years by CSR and BSES. About 20 FTE staff are involved in direct extension activities over the 3 districts.

Regional Industry Board

Key participants from across industry provide some input into tackling strategic issues.

BSES, Cane Productivity Board and CSR staff and structures

These three organisations provide the staff and management oversight into activities.

10. PROCESS/METHODS USED:

Grower Productivity Groups/Forums

Each comprising of 15-25 growers with 3/year; grower driven; grower sharing; priorities developed. The groups meet quarterly. The facilitators work with both R&D priorities identified in the region as well as particular topics of interest to group members.

R&D Groups

Comprising of growers, millers and R&E staff to collate knowledge and develop research & training priorities.

Training Courses

VET accredited courses run for growers and harvesters.

Demonstration sites

Different on-farm trials and demonstrations in specific districts targeting specific technologies.

Web sites

Harvesting and other information is put on the web.

11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):

To date the project has been evaluated using the “3 level model” of Coutts. In the first instance, the focus was on activities (Level 1), whether planned activities were being undertaken and how well they seemed to be undertaken and structured. This information came from project records and interviews with staff. The next phase (Level 2) focused on receiving feedback from both staff and growers through surveys (web surveys and face to face administered by facilitators) on their reaction to activities and changes that were evident.

A significant result was the evidence of strong cross-organisational cooperation and (re)alignment of objectives. Most growers surveyed could point to change in practice in one or more management/technology areas over the last two years which they attributed to group influences. For example, 50% of growers that responded to the survey in the Herbert had changed cane varieties; and 57% of growers in the Burdekin had changed irrigation practice.

A quantitative productivity and economic analysis (Level 3) is currently being undertaken.

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

The evidence of the staff and grower surveys is that the CPI/Prosper is seen to be very effective in bring together R&D effort and working with growers to bring about change. The surveys referred to above indicate that activities are having a widespread impact in adoption of different practices. The grower groups are run in all districts and are expected to have a ‘flow-on’ effect to other growers not attending meetings.

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

There are internal documents available on the CPI/Prosper and its evaluation. Information can be found on the BSES website: www.bses.org.au or the SRDC website www.srdc.gov.au

14. ISSUES:

Quantitative analysis is a critical component of the evaluation to provide evidence to investors that the RD&E activities are providing returns on capital. The qualitative evaluation provides strong indication of change and also areas to strengthen the initiatives.

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:

This is a very intensive and well structured approach to RD&E. It involves the industry at different levels (Regional Industry Boards, R&D Committees and grower groups) and has a high level of cross-organisational cooperation. Indications are that there is a high rate of change being facilitated through the activities of the initiatives and has focused the industry on the changes needed to meet the current challenges. The excellent records in some districts allows significant and accurate quantitative analysis to be undertaken on impacts. The grower groups appear to provide a good mix of RD&E/grower driven approaches to activities. It also provides a good mix of group meetings, on-farm trials, and information provision.

16. REVIEW METHODS:

This review was based on an on-going internal evaluation of the CPI/Prosper being undertaken by Coutts J&R for BSES and CSR. It involved analysis of project documentation, interviews, web and face-to-face surveys.