

6th October 2014

The Secretary

Rural and Regional Affairs

Current and Future arrangements for the marketing of Australian Sugar

I am a cane farmer supplying Mulgrave Central Mill with sugar cane for which I am paid on the basis of its sugar content. Since your committee is exploring the sale and future arrangements for the marketing of sugar I have decided to put my concerns forward.

The Mulgrave Central Mill is now owned by the Thai Mitr Pohl Company and sells its own sugar and its farmers' sugar. My view is that this company is well run and has a good record on selling sugar and has outperformed the Queensland Sugar Limited since it has had this arrangement.

However, I have problems with the purchase of the sugar from the farmers. The reason for this concern is that the CCS (Commercial Cane Sugar) developed by CSR in 1890's and used since 1916 has always been analyzed by the purchaser with an independent check chemist in the laboratory. Since the demise of the B.S.E.S (Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations) and the foreign purchase there is now no check chemist. Massive changes have taken place in sugar processing since 1916. I fail to see how the old system of sugar cane analysis is relevant as it is the only process that has not changed.

The cane is crushed and the juice is analyzed by the use of NIR (Near Infra Red) technology which was developed and sold by B.S.E.S. However, this technology was not adopted by Sucrogen, now Wilmar, because they considered it was not accurate enough for measurement.

How does the use of NIR, which uses the reflection of light to measure sugar content, fit in with the National Measurements Act 1960 pertaining to the use for sale of sugar as my soil has high Nickel and Chromium content which is unusual and causes NIR to give incorrect readings.

I have been trying for some time to have the Mill laboratories NATA (National Association of Testing Laboratories) registered to ease my mind but without success. The sugar produced for sale is sampled at the Bulk Sugar Terminal and the sugar analyzed in a registered (NATA)

laboratory in Sydney. Obviously the laboratories used to pay the farmers for the sugar they produce in the cane are not up to the standard required to test the quality of the sugar to be on sold to customers. If farmers are not being paid correctly for the sugar in their cane then they are already disadvantaged when it comes to the marketing of the processed sugar.

When I get the laboratory results from the mill on the computer the morning after my cane is crushed, the figures are always interim results. Why aren't we dealing with an exact science? The technology is available for people who are visiting Europe to control the irrigation of their home lawns by Iphone, but I have to be paid by technology which is over 120 years old.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on sugar marketing.

Regards,

Alan Barnard