

MIDLANDS SOUTH

EXTENSION MATTERS

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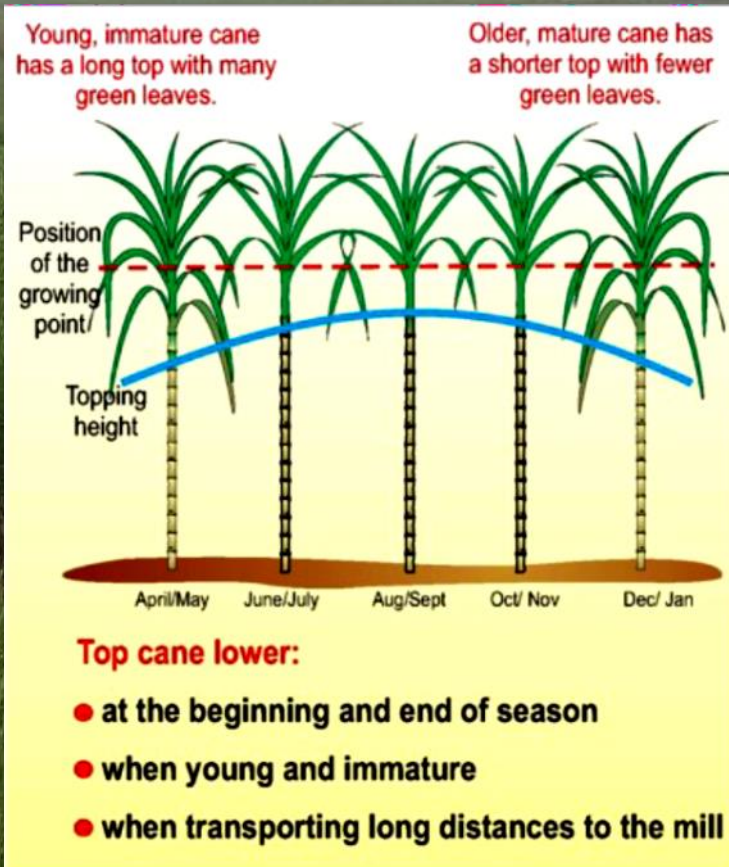


CARRY OVER CANE

With the very uncertain times we are going through with regards to cane deliveries and potential carry-over of more and more cane, I would like to offer some suggestions on how to manage your crop.

With the cut back of 15-25% of next season's deliveries you will have to maximise the quality of the cane that is sent to the mill.

- Ripen all immature cane after testing. By ripening the cane there will also be a reduction in the yield.
- If you don't ripen, top lower to ensure only the mature part of the cane is sent to the mill. This will also assist in sending less tons cane to the mill. On average, topping 15cm below the meristem will reduce tons by 5-10 ton, and 30cm will reduce by 10-15 tons, depending on the variety and the age of the cane.



- Minimize burn-to-crush delay.
- Don't send highly eldana-infected cane to the mill.
- Don't send cane with sour rot to the mill.
- Don't send old, frosted cane to the mill that was not harvested after the frost event.
- Ensure that scouting for disease and insect damage is done timeously and treat to minimise any damage that will lower cane quality.

◀ Note the correct topping height at the specific time of the year.
 Test the cane with a refractometer to ensure the correct topping height is obtained.



Some discussion points from different growers which may help in making decisions around delivering less cane and saving money:

- Replant only high potential areas for now. **Long fallow** marginal areas.
- Some growers are saying they plan to fertilise less. SASRI does not support the application of fertiliser lower than the recommended rates for your crop. Some of the negative consequences of reduced fertiliser will be stressed and more disease-prone cane, slower or reduced canopy (which will result in more weeding), and possibly less ratoons.
- Diversify – some of the enterprises that could be considered include livestock, cash crops, Macadamia and Avocado.
- If you are farming cattle at the moment the long fallow areas could be planted to a grazing grass which will assist you to increase the herd.
- Do not plant/harvest marginal areas.
- Rather not plant frost areas where the cane quality can be uncertain.
- Don't send old cane that is left on the loading zone to the mill.
- Don't mow your contours/cane breaks as frequently - consider chemical mowing.
- Think twice about ratooning/planting very steep areas. That is more labour intensive.
- Optimise your fertiliser application by taking soil samples and only apply what the crop needs. With the cost of fertiliser currently, this point is very important.

These are just some points that were raised when visiting growers.

If you have more ideas or want to discuss further please contact the office for an appointment.

