

# MEDIA RELEASE

BSES Limited



4 March, 2010

## Taste of sweet success and canegrubs on the menu

This morning, over 80 key industry and government representatives gathered in Brisbane to attend the first BSES Activate industry breakfast for 2010.

Activate speakers included BSES Principal Scientist Dr Nils Berding based in Meringa, and Principal Entomologist Dr Peter Samson based in Mackay.

Guests listened with great interest to Dr Berding's presentation titled *Sweet success: A pre-retirement sojourn in sugarcane crop improvement (1966-2010)*. In 1965, Nils graduated with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from the University of Queensland and commenced his employment with BSES in Meringa on 4 January, 1966.

From 1988 to 2010 Dr Berding was successful in obtaining 20 SRDC funded projects. A number of projects were led by him, and others co-lead with national and international collaborators.

The importance and impact of the varieties released during Dr Berding's career, and the huge gain in the efficiency of the breeding program based on innovative R&D is evident in the development of 55 cultivars from 1966 to 2009. This represents to 42% of 'Q' varieties approved (Q113-Q240<sup>(b)</sup>).

Dr Berding said that the effort of the entire plant breeding team resulted in 205,526,080 tonnes of cane being harvested from 1966-2009 (Q113-Q237<sup>(b)</sup>).

'My greatest achievements were in establishing the numerous facilities in Meringa such as the cross pollination sheds, head house, cold-dehumidification seed treatment facility, photoperiod facilities built in 1999 funded by SRDC and more recently in 2008 funded by BSES'.

In his opening statement Dr Berding said 'I have been in front of many an audience and always presented with confidence, today however, I am feeling a little nervous, and this is because for the first time in my career my dear wife Barbara is in the audience.'



**Above:** Left to right, BSES CEO Eoin Wallis, Mrs Barbara Berding, and Dr Nils Berding.



**Above:** Aerial photograph of the impressive photoperiod facility located at BSES Meringa.

The second topic on the Activate agenda was *Canegrubs: What do you do and when do you do it?*, presented by Dr Peter Samson. Dr Samson said that canegrubs are still our main insect pest of sugarcane.

'Canegrub losses can be very large if not controlled.'

Canegrub losses in northern Queensland rocketed in 2001. 'This significant loss instigated the development of a GrubPlan program and booklet published in 2001. 'The GrubPlan program was very successful in the Mackay and Herbert districts', said Dr Samson.

Since 2001 a number of new insecticides were registered for the control of canegrubs. BSES revised the GrubPlan in 2007 with partial funding by SRDC and QPI&F. Dr Samson advised that a good monitoring system, the gap between a rise in grub populations and growers' response will be minimised.

Dr Samson commented that while options are available for canegrub management in both plant and ratoon crops, monitoring is the key to pro-active management of these sugarcane pests.

'Current research in easier grub monitoring using sound, remote sensing of grub damage using GPS, and improved knowledge of beetle behaviour by attaching a radio transmitter to the beetle are progressing well and is ongoing,' Dr Samson said.

'Since 2007, grower groups testing, monitoring and prediction systems with BSES are being implemented and evaluated by grower groups in several districts,' concluded Dr Samson.



**Above:** BSES Principal Entomologist Dr Peter Samson entertained the audience during his presentation with beetles flying and cane chopping grubs sound effects.



**Above:** Massive damage inflicted by canegrubs to a Mackay sugarcane farm.

BSES CEO Eoin Wallis highlighted how events such as Activate are important to keep industry informed. 'Activate is always well attended by industry representatives including CANEGROWERS, ASMC, ACFA where presentations are specifically targeted at topics of interest to the Australian sugarcane industry.'

**>>> ends**

**For more information contact: Eve McDonald, Communications Manager, ph 07 3331 3340**

**About BSES Limited** - BSES Limited is the leading provider of research, development and extension services to the Australian sugarcane industry.

**P: 07 3331 3333 F: 07 3871 0383 W: [bses.org.au](http://bses.org.au) E: [info@bses.org.au](mailto:info@bses.org.au)  
50 Meiers Road, Indooroopilly | PO Box 86, Indooroopilly Q 4068**