

MEDIA RELEASE

2 November 2018

A CRUSHING UPDATE FROM THE FSC ON THE 2018 CANE SEASON

FSC advises that as of 8am on 2nd November 2018, a total of 1,319,484 tonnes of cane had been crushed. Labasa Mill had crushed 523,379 tonnes, Lautoka Mill 464,507 tonnes and Rarawai Mill 331,598 tonnes for the season to date.

In order to monitor remaining cane and to ensure it is crushed, a detailed tracking system to monitor daily harvesting in each sector has been used by FSC to determine the available cane remaining to be harvested. This indicates that the following cane remains to be crushed; Labasa Mill 124,421 tonnes, Lautoka Mill 91,638 tonnes and Rarawai Mill 170,552 tonnes. In total, 386,611 tonnes remains to be harvested from 2nd November 2018.

As previously announced by the Sugar Industry Tribunal, FSC plans to crush all cane by mid December 2018, with a total of 35 crushing days remaining, excluding public holidays. This would require each mill to crush the following minimum tonnage per day – Labasa Mill 3,500 tonnes per day, Lautoka Mill 4,500 tonnes per day and Rarawai 3,000 tonnes per day. The targeted minimum daily crush is 11,000 tonnes per day. The FSC mills have all achieved better than this in the current season. Throughput will thus depend on cane deliveries to the mills.



Left: an FSC harvester operating in Rakiraki in July this year (file footage)

FSC CEO Graham Clark says “for Viti Levu we will combine Lautoka and Rarawai mill capacity to enable a minimum total of 7,500 tonnes to be crushed per day. The diversion of cane from Rarawai to Lautoka continues successfully and makes this achievable. The Labasa Mill is well placed, assuming current performance continues, to end crushing on time”.

The deployment of mechanical harvesters is being co-ordinated and maximized in all sectors to harvest all flat land cane as soon as possible. Manual harvesting is being managed by deploying cutting teams from completed farms to those still needing to be cut. This is in addition to efforts by farmers to secure and retain their cutters. Additional cane cutters are being sought where possible.

Clark says “together with the Sugar Cane Growers Council, we have met with the Methodist Church Ra Division, who have had cutters working this season and are trying to assist with providing more cutters to assist in the Rarawai Mill area. Two additional gangs will start this weekend with further numbers to be determined by next week”.

Rail transport of cane is being prioritized with repairs to locos and rail trucks ongoing as required. Turnaround of rail trucks is another focus area to improve rail availability. FSC has also agreed to the selective conversion from rail to lorry haulage in designated areas to assist in accessing cane distant from the mills.

In the last month, mill performance has been hampered by cane supply after the recent rains. Some stop start conditions have had to be managed carefully, but the instruction is to try to not stop crushing and use rail to link up with lorry deliveries. With the dry weather over the last week, mill performance is much improved and an average of 13,000 tonnes of cane has been crushed per day.

Clark says “this action plan is weather dependent and we will continue to review field conditions if it rains again heavily. Although provisional end of crush had been announced by the Tribunal as 13th December 2018 we are required to make another announcement before this, so will update as required”.

Opportunities to improve this crushing plan include working with farmers to try to secure Sunday harvesting and cane deliveries. This would add another five days available crushing time, equivalent to 55,000 tonnes crushed. In addition if cane supply is accelerated, the mills can crush more than the target of 11,000 tonnes per day. This has been achieved in the past week and could further reduce crushing time.

Daily tracking and monitoring will continue until all cane has been harvested.

FSC and SCGC staff are working with farmers to identify problem areas as they arise, and to provide swift solutions to get the season completed.

ENDS

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