

# Sugar News

NUESTRA INDUSTRIA AZUCARERA

Sugar Industry News | VOL. 4/2018 Issue 1

## BSI Breaks Ground for Significant DC Sugars Investment



All over African, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), sugar producing countries are preparing themselves for significant market changes. The elimination of quotas constraining beet sugar production in the European Union (EU) market, in October 2017, means the pricing preferences traditionally enjoyed in the EU market will be a thing of the past. The impact of this unprecedented change will be a direct hit to Belize's sugar industry, as traditionally, the industry has relied on the majority production and export of raw sugar for further refining abroad to the EU market, its primary export market. This is happening at just the wrong time for the Belize sugar industry, as a global surplus of sugar means global prices are currently low, and this will become the reference point for future sugar cane pricing in Belize.



BSI has been developing plans to minimize the negative impact of these changes on the industry in Belize. The company is increasing the production and sale of Direct Consumption

(DC) Sugars to alternative markets where prices will be better. The company currently produces around 30,000 tons of this sugar which can be consumed directly and does not need to be refined again by the customer. On September 18, 2017, at a ground-breaking event at the Tower Hill Sugar Mill in Orange Walk, BSI demonstrated its commitment to the future of the Sugar Industry by announcing a further major investment to expand production of DC sugars which will also have the benefit of improving the mill's grinding rate capacity. The investment of BZ\$ 22million will increase the factory's production capacity of direct consumption sugars to 50,000 tons which attracts a higher price than raw sugar in the markets open to Belize.

Additionally, BSI is seeking assistance from regional governments to properly protect the CARICOM market for Caribbean-produced sugar, so as to provide Belize with an additional premium market for its sugar.



"We are at a critical time; in fact, time is simply not on our side. We have been raising the alarm since these market changes were announced in 2013.

In this current environment it is sink or swim, and we have no intention of drowning. Therefore, we must act decisively and strategically."

- Celestino Ruiz, ASR Group Country Manager

"The investment should also improve the mill's grinding rate to enable the mill to grind 1.35 million tons of cane in a 26 week crop period [...] The higher prices we can achieve through this investment, relative to what could have been achieved from the sale of raw sugar, will benefit the whole industry and help to make cane farming more sustainable."

- Mac McLachlan, ASR Group VP of International Relations



Contributor: Jeremy Gongora, William Neal





# Model Behavior Change Projects for Industry Modernization

*"I like the idea of change and I am a person who likes to try different things. I have seen the mechanical harvesters work in the United States as well as in the fields of BSI [Belize Sugar Industries Ltd] and I believe they can work in my fields. It would be very good if other farmers would join the program and try it. I believe they would be very comfortable with the results and they will see more benefits with this way of harvesting cane." – Gregorio Espiritu, Progressive Farmer*



**Although change in life is constant, adapting to change is not always easy especially when it seems to conflict with tradition. The sugar industry of Belize currently finds itself at a crossroads, as the global market challenges require significant changes to many traditional industry practices to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Belize Sugar Industries Ltd (BSI) is implementing several projects to help improve the sustainability of the industry. For the 2016-2017 Crop Season, BSI launched a project to introduce 49 sugar cane farmers from the north, south, east and west of the sugar belt to mechanical harvesting. More than 17,000 tons of cane were mechanically harvested with an average cost saving of BZ\$ 6 per ton of cane for farmers.**

The sugar industry of Belize has traditionally relied almost exclusively on manual harvesting of sugarcane. This has been a reliable system over the years, creating employment and ensuring cane delivery to the mill. However, there are a number of challenges moving forward. The labor force available for manual harvesting is decreasing and fluctuates during the crop season. In addition, the lifting of the constraints on Beet sugar production in the European Union (EU) and the consequent projected drop in sugar prices requires greater efficiency and reduced production costs, if farmers are to remain sustainable.

Over the years, the increase in cane cutting and delivery costs have also reduced the net income of farmers. This mechanical harvesting project allowed these farmers to respond to the shortage of manual labor, harvest their fields in large contiguous blocks, eliminate unnecessary tasks and activities and consequently reduce their harvesting and delivery costs by an average of BZ\$ 6 per ton of cane. Not only did they benefit economically, but have also become positive and progressive role models for the industry.



Medium-sized farmer, Francisca Mendez, was quick to endorse the project because of the results she experienced, *"One of the benefits was that I was able to harvest my fields quickly. It didn't take much time and I didn't have to pay people to burn my fields or open fire paths. The costs were lower when compared to other reaping groups and this helped me a lot as I was able to purchase fertilizer for my cane fields with the additional money saved under the project."*



Equally satisfied with the outcome, Remijio Sanchez praised the project, *"We have to be realistic. What we need right now are activities and projects which will save us and help us have more money in our pockets. The costs of living are very high right now. If you have any child going to school, then you have to re-think your costs. Before, sometimes I had to adjust from my salary to pay for harvesting and delivery costs. Under this project, I had money left and I was able to pay the college fees for my son."*

Through this model behavior change project of Mechanical Harvesting, BSI has been able to demonstrate the benefits of reducing harvesting and production costs through block harvesting as well as strengthened the communication bridge with farmers through engagement and direct contact with them.



The project utilizes harvesters owned & operated by Northern Enterprise Company Limited (NECL).



# Women: An Integral Part of Our Sugar Cane Farming Communities!

**“Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities.” – UNWOMEN.ORG**



**Rubire Figueroa - one of the women who was awarded a package to help boost her small business.**



**BSCFA is proud to be supporting single headed household families**

Women represent a little under 40% of the membership of The Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association. Though they may not be seen cutting cane in the field or driving tractors or trucks, they do constitute an integral part of our sugar cane farming business and communities. On behalf of the household, generally the men are the ones directly attending the cane fields while the women assist with the administrative aspects of the cane business such as record keeping, bank statement reconciliations, workers payroll, invoice payments etc., in addition to ensuring meals are ready for the family and ensuring children go to school.

Based on findings from our Youth Empowerment surveys, it has been noted that many households are increasingly single-mother headed households; some cared by the grandparents with the mother having to be the main source of income. It has been noted that many have to rely on doing small food and craft sales to obtain an income to support their families and more so afford for their children to remain in school.

In this regard, in November 2016, the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association members approved an initial budget from their Fairtrade Premium funds for an income generation program geared toward women empowerment primarily its women membership which may find themselves in situations as single-mother income earners, where the production of sugar cane earnings may not suffice to sustain their households and education for their children.

The Alternative Income Generation – Women Empowerment program is geared to provide women with an avenue for a source of income;

whereby they can earn some income to increase the chances that the children in the household remain in school while still being at home to care for their children and not having to leave their home to earn the additional income. In many households the older siblings are deprived from school to allow the younger ones a chance to attend school; or situations where in order to allow one sibling, generally the eldest, to further his or her education for higher learning - whether it be secondary or tertiary level, the younger siblings are deprived from school.

Women farmers fulfilling the required criteria were awarded with a package valued at \$1,200 to help them boost their production of their existing income generation activities and or according to identified skill sets. It is estimated that this program will impact more than 50 households within the first year, by directly improving the standard of living for the women participating under the program as well as their children and surrounding community members. Some of the participating women have increased their sales of food or baked goods and others their production of garments, sewing services, production of coconut oil and milk, ground pepper, vegetables to name a few.

This new fiscal year, members further approved additional Fairtrade Premium funds to expand the program and integrate not only women farmers but also other women in the community. The intent is to continue investing in women empowerment projects and programs to enhance the livelihood of women and children in BSCFA sugar cane farming communities.



# CSCPA Implements Second Annual Fertilizer & Agrochemical Program

As a result of the current sugar cane market challenges facing farmers of the industry, the Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association (CSCPA) continues with the implementation of programs which are positively impacting its farmers in the field sector. This year, the CSCPA has embarked on a second annual fertilizer and agrochemical program which will positively impact the production of all its farmer members.

This program also goes hand in hand with our Fairtrade certification and the association's commitment to corresponding norms and criterias. The program has received great applause and appreciation from all cane farmers. The sugar industry markets continue to look very grim for this present crop year and the CSCPA has the commitment of achieving sustainable sugar cane production for all farmers at a time when they need it the most.

*Contributor: Leonardo Folgarait, Erika Sosa*



## Protect your Health when Using Pesticides

Pesticides can enter the body through the skin pores and when breathing. Eating, drinking and smoking are not allowed in contaminated areas. You can be exposed to pesticides when mixing or applying pesticides, spillage and damaged containers.



**Remember to always use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ensure they are in good conditions!**

*Contributor: Abi Pech*

## PSCPA Empowering Women Through Health Education & Financial Literacy



**From August to November 2017, PSCPA implemented a project, utilizing premiums from Fairtrade, targeted at Sugar Cane Female Farmers. The project was carried out in the four zones of the association: Guinea Grass, San Estevan, Cristo Rey and San Roman. The project targeted 60 females (15 from each zone) between the ages of 18 to 70. The following objectives were achieved through the project:**

- Improved the quality of life of women through education & awareness and provision of health care services
- Improved their sexual and reproductive health knowledge
- Empowered these female farmers with financial skills to be an asset to their family farming business.
- Enhanced awareness of possible diseases and health risks so they can mitigate these problems with time.

*The project helped women take advantage of opportunities that benefited them and their families, prepared them for the labor force and also helped them understand their legal and reproductive rights. The project was considered a success.*



*Contributor: Abi Pech, Jeremy Gongora*



## PSCPA to Test Locally Produced Bio-Fertilizer and Bio-Pesticide



PSCPA has been developing practical solutions for their farmers to manage the current reduction in cane prices. When sugar prices drop, one of the first effects for farmers is to cut the application of fertilizers and pesticides, since these are two components which significantly increase the cost of producing sugar cane.

PSCPA members had the opportunity to attend the International Sugar Congress organized in Havana Cuba last year; at this event, representatives saw some effective low cost technologies being utilized by cane producers. When representatives from the association came back from the congress, they immediately started working on similar initiatives under the leadership of by Mr. Tiburcio Acosta, Zone 2 Manager. Currently, the association, is producing large volumes of bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticide through the use of local residues obtained from agricultural areas. The base materials for producing these environmentally friendly products include animal waste along with household ingredients.

On January 15th 2018, the third anniversary of PSCPA was celebrated. In commemoration of this very important day for the association, Zone 2 farmers decided to do the first trial of bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticide using a boom sprayer. Through mechanical application, it will be possible to significantly cover a larger area of land by individual cane

farmers.

This first application trial was conducted in 2.5 acres of sugarcane land belonging to farmer Rogelio Blanco (*picture above*). The effects of the product will be analyzed and compared to commercial products being used and sold by different local organizations. The bio-fertilizer produced by the farmers is expected to be strongly beneficial as it potentially accelerates the growth and formation of more leaves in sugar cane. Another potential benefit is to control the population of frog hoppers; this is being tested using different organic ingredients available in each zone.

The product used for the trial was elaborated in only 35 days. When preparing a 180 liter tank, the production yield for application is approximately 250 liters and 90 liters of slugged product which can subsequently be applied to the soil as a soil enhancer or foliar fertilizer.

With the support of Fairtrade funds, farmers are leading the development of a product which promises to bring several benefits, among them is its low production cost. This opportunity comes at a crucial time when prices for sugarcane are forecasted to be lower. Through these types of initiatives and projects, farmers are being empowered to produce products that are environmentally friendly, locally made and which can help to alleviate their costs of production and income.



Contributor: Dr. Carlos Itza, Tiburcio Acosta



# SIRDI's Farmer Field School Program: Certificate of Completion Ceremony

*"Improving productivity through participatory methods as tools"*



The Sugar Industry Research & Development Institute of Belize (SIRDI) in collaboration with the HERSHEY Company, "Learn to Grow" Program, celebrated the Farmer Field School (FFS) Certificate of Completion Ceremony on September 27, 2017.

Group four of the FFS Program initiated in 2015 with approximately 175 leading farmers enrolled in six groups. Twelve training modules were delivered to a group of enthusiastic farmers who were willing to share and learn more on best agronomical practices, to increase productivity through sustainable farming methods.

As in most life situations, every good thing comes to an end. However, the completion of the FFS Training Program marks a new beginning with a change for adopting and implementing better practices. Practices aimed to increase efficiency in sugarcane production, resulting in a positive impact on farmers' livelihood.

A total of 371 farmers (340 males, 31 females) were awarded with certificates of completion for their success in the Program. The event was one-of-a-kind for the Sugar Cane Industry, as well as for the entire country of Belize. SIRDI is the first institution to adopt and implement such a distinct program – the FFS Program.

The ceremony was celebrated at the SIRDI headquarter, located on Mile 66.5 Philip Goldson Highway. Approximately 500 farmers and invited guests joined in celebrating this major accomplishment and milestone.

The ceremony was complemented by St. John's College student, Mr. Curt Smith, who delighted the audience with the harmonic sounds of his violin while playing the Belizean National Anthem. Mr. Marcos Osorio, SIRDI Director, delivered the welcome address, followed by Ms. Marissa Cervantes, one of our very own female farmers, who highlighted the celebration with her special remarks. Keynote address was delivered via an audiovisual provided by the Hershey

Company. Thereafter, a special recognition was prepared in memory of those FFS participants who have parted this life, followed by the issuance of certificates to the Farmer Field School Graduates.

SIRDI would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated, or contributed to the success of the event. These include the three Cane Farmer's Associations: (BSCFA, CSCPA & PSCPA); ASR Group Belize Sugar; the Sugar Industry Control Board (SICB); Ministry of Education; Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); Pesticide Control Board (PCB); BELAGRO; Inter American Development Bank (IDB); the Commercial Banks and other invited guests who witnessed the accomplishment of such a milestone.



*The Sugar Industry Research & Development Institute (SIRDI) makes special recognition of the Hershey Company for their invaluable contribution to improve the livelihoods of our Belizean Cane Farmers.*





# BSI Launches Pre-harvest Field Cane Quality Program with Funding from the Hershey Company



*Thanks to the Hershey Company for funding a project which aims to increase farmer revenue by offering valuable training to local farmers and improving the quality of sugarcane delivered to the mill.*



“This program in Belize will help us proudly say we are buying the best possible quality sugar that was grown in a way that helps others.” This is what Perry Cerminara, Commodities Sourcing Director from The Hershey Company, stated at the Launch of the “Sweet Sampling for Sweet Returns” Project. The event took place at Richmond Hills, Guinea Grass Farms in the Orange Walk District on Tuesday November 14, 2017.

The objective of this three year project is to offer technical assistance and training to test group and harvesting group leaders on how to select the sweetest and most mature canes for harvesting. With the results of cane sampling and analysis, farmers can make better harvesting plans which will help improve sugar yields for the entire sugar industry. During the launch, six test groups from all three associations signed up for participation for the first round of pre-harvest cane quality testing for crop season 2017-2018.



Perry continued saying that he looks forward for great things under this partnership and that the company is excited to genuinely be a part of something that’s enriching other people’s lives.

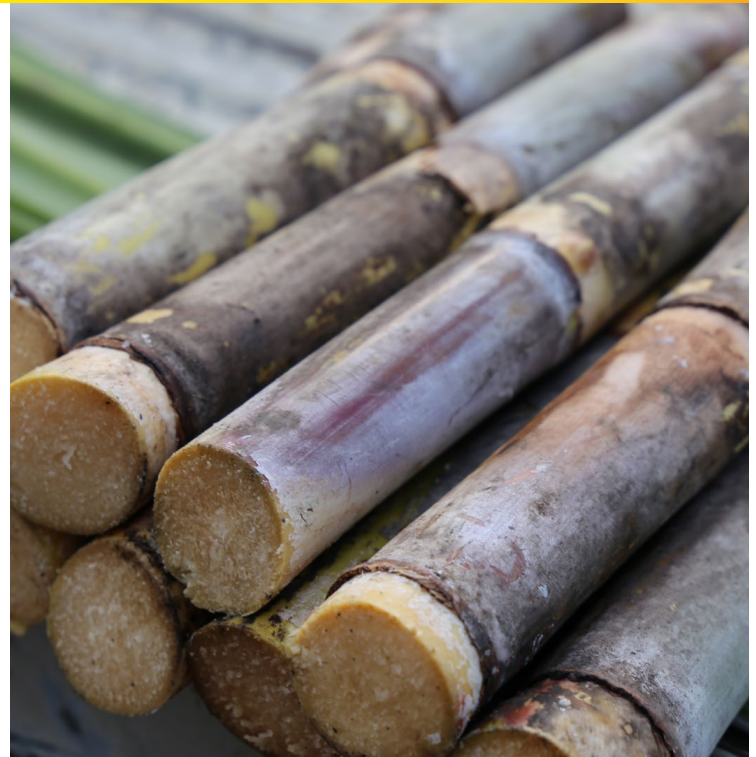
The Hershey Company contributed US\$300,000 to the project for the three years. BSI’s counterpart contribution is geared towards technical expertise and cane analysis at its Spectracane Laboratory meanwhile the SCPC is contributing field and lab personnel as well as the use of the newly established Near Infrared Laboratory (NIR).

BSI, in partnership with the Sugar Cane Production Committee (SCPC) will implement this project co-funded by the Hershey Company. In attendance at the launch were officials from the Hershey Company in Pennsylvania, Perry Cerminara and Scott Rownd, employees of BSI, representatives of the government regulating bodies and the three sugar cane farmer associations.

The process of pre-harvest cane quality monitoring is like taking a ‘blood test’ of the cane. It consists of taking samples of fields that are ten months or older. These samples are taken to a laboratory to extract its juice and then analyze for Brix, Pol, Fibre, Moisture and calculated Purity. The results of these analyses are then given to the group leaders to prioritize their harvesting.

*Contributor: Susana Castillo*





## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

# BETTER SUGAR

## TOP 5 BENEFITS

### OF TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS FOR THE BELIZE SUGAR INDUSTRY

A safe and easy-to-use tool that measures quality of sugar cane using infrared light.

Reflected patterns of light from the cane sample show the chemical composition and quality of the harvested sugar cane.

Results are produced within minutes and is all conducted in a fully transparent lab, operated by professionals before cane enters the weighing station.

# NIR

GET YOUR CANE TESTED TO START REAPING THE BENEFITS OF NEW INFORMATION

*Improving Practices Today*

FOR TOMORROW'S SWEET SUCCESS



### 1. Higher Quality Cane

Quality testing can lead to higher quality cane for the inspired cane farmer.

### 2. Fast, Safe, Reliable Testing

NIR sampling technology is fast, safe, reliable, and free from human error.

### 3. Improved Harvest Planning

Data analysis conducted by SIMIS improves harvest planning through identifying which plots and parcels are ideal for cutting. This further serves to increase yields.

### 4. Immediate AND easy access to Information

Farmers will have the opportunity to find out the quality of cane in real time and be able to assess this information quickly in order to make improvements and produce better cane yearly.

### 5. Competitive Edge in World Market

Higher quality cane means higher grade sugar and an increased global demand for Belizean sugar. Higher market demand will build a better industry for you and Belize!



*Thanks to everyone who made our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Event a Huge Success!*





# Thank You

## to the Belize Mission Group for providing Free Dental Health Care for BSI Employees



The Belize Mission Project consists of a group of 42 doctors from the US specializing in the medical and dental fields. Their home base is in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, however they travel all over the country offering yearly dental outreach programs within low income Belizean communities.

Belize Sugar Industries Limited (BSI), through the initiatives of the Cane Farmer Relations Manager, its extended team and the Human Resources Department, hosted a part of the group from the 23rd – 25th October 2017, to perform free dental services to employees of BSI who do not count with insurance. The team was comprised of one oral surgeon, and two general dentists each with their assistants.

Nurse Lupe Ack, the visiting team coordinator for Orange Walk Town, working along with the Mission Project for 4 years, was directly involved with the enrollment of the employees; she was assisted by Julie Torres of BSI creating records and appointments for each of them. She reported that the team saw a total 125 employees.



*"I'm very thankful to BSI for organizing these free dental check-ups for us employees. I'm also thankful for the doctors who provided an excellent service. I hope this is something that can be done once more in the future."  
- Orlando Trejo*

BSI was happy to host this team and hopes to work with them sometime in the near future.

## BSI Independence Day Float Celebrates Company's Green Energy Achievements

On September 21, BSI was thrilled to once more participate in the Orange Walk Independence Day Carnival Parade! In addition to showcasing pride in agriculture and manufacturing, this year's float highlighted the company's ongoing commitment to green energy.



The float featured information on how the mill uses leftover sugarcane fiber called bagasse to generate steam and clean electricity at the Belize Co-Generation Energy (Belcogen) plant, which is used to power operations at the mill.

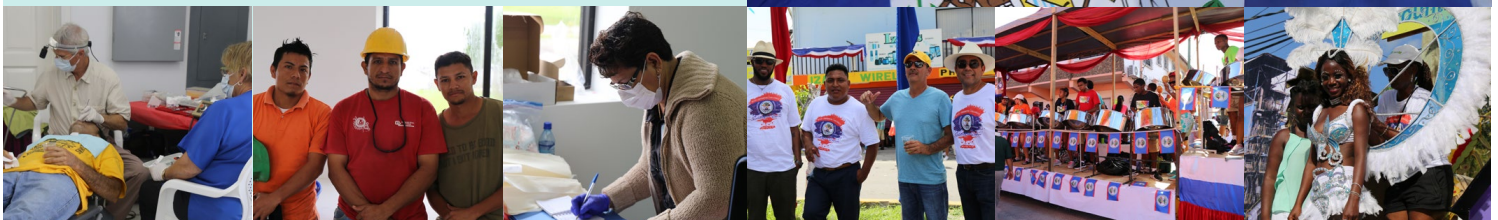


The Carbon Dioxide released by Belcogen is re-absorbed by the sugar cane plants in the fields; this creates a cycle of production and absorption of carbon dioxide by our own operations - leading to 0% carbon footprint.



In addition to helping run operations sustainably, the energy produced at Belcogen is helping provide energy independence for Belize. The plant supplies electricity for approximately 15% to the national grid.

Thank you to all of our employees whose hard work helped make our float and the parade both enjoyable and educational!



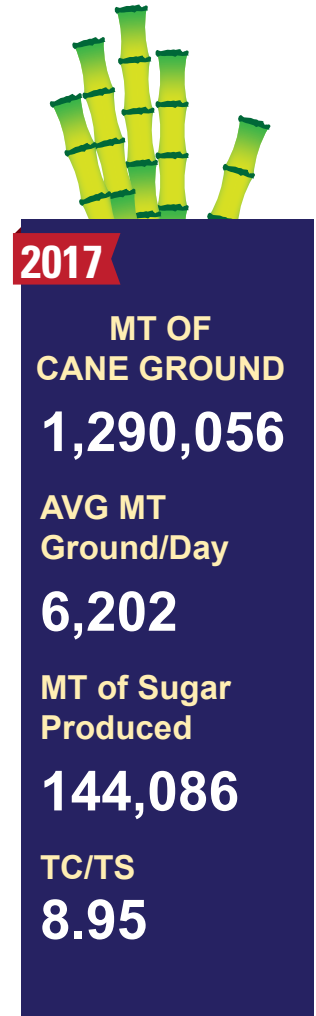
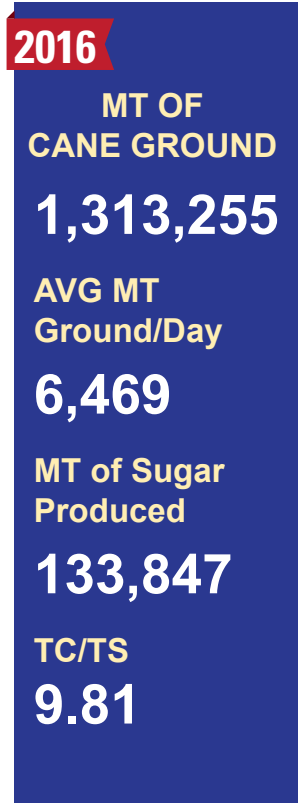
Contributor: Susana Castillo

Contributor: Zach Singer, Jeremy Gongora



# BELIZE SUGAR INDUSTRY

## 2017 CROP SEASON



**Total Tons of Sugar EXPORTED**

**2016 120,515 MT**



**2017 132,186 MT\***



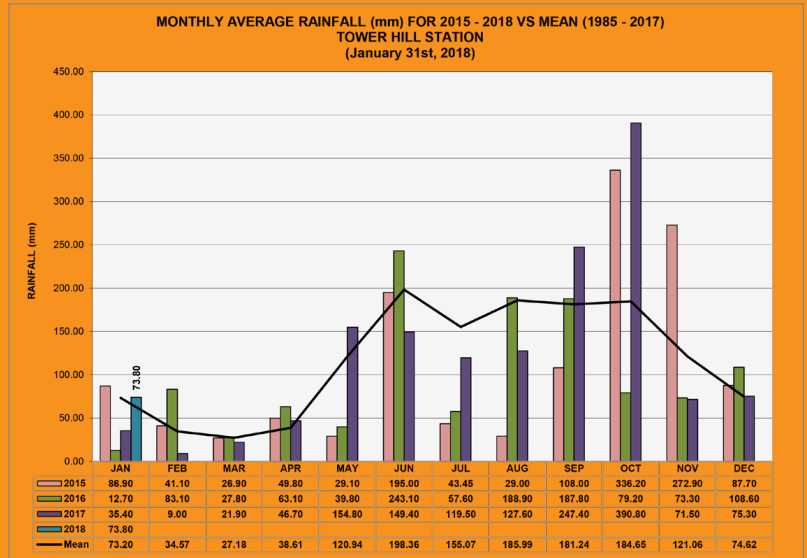
<p><b>RAINFALL</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>2016</b></td> <td><b>2017</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1,165 MM</td> <td>1,449.3 MM</td> </tr> </table>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	1,165 MM	1,449.3 MM	<p><b>LOST TIME (Hrs.)</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>2016</b></td> <td><b>2017</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>504 (10.4%)</td> <td>440 (8.8%)</td> </tr> </table>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	504 (10.4%)	440 (8.8%)	<p><b>POL EXTRACTION</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>2016</b></td> <td><b>2017</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>95.92%</td> <td>96.16%</td> </tr> </table>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	95.92%	96.16%
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# How Weather Affects Sugar Cane Production & Operations

The graph shows rainfall recorded at Tower Hill from 2015 up to January 31, 2018. As can be noted from the graph, rainfall recorded for December 2017 was 75.30 mm, 12.4 mm lower than in December 2015 and 33.3 mm lower than in December 2016. This led to favorable conditions for the start of crop on December 7th 2017. These good weather conditions prevailed during the entire month of December leading to an easier process of harvesting and delivery of cane by farmers to the mill.

In January 2018, weather conditions were unusually very high, especially towards the end of the month with a total of 73.80 mm recorded at the Tower Hill Station. This is a large contrast in comparison to the monthly rainfall for 2015, 2016 and 2017 with 86.90 mm, 12.70 mm and 35.40 mm of recorded rainfall. These weather conditions led to increase in mud levels at the factory and the need for farmers to implement control measures to reduce the amount of mud in cane.



## Paying forward with the Spirit of Giving: BSI's Security Department Helps a Family in Need

Contributor: : Alfredo Carvajal, Jeremy Gongora



Christmas time is all about loved ones, thankfulness, finding time for others and forgetting ourselves through the spirit of giving. At Belize Sugar Industries Ltd (BSI), the Security Department wanted to pay forward goodness and kindness by helping a less fortunate family in the local community of Orange Walk Town. The project idea was initially presented by Mr. Chasen Rodriguez, a Senior Security Officer, who felt motivated to help a family in need, especially during this season of the year.

The security team assessed the needy areas of the community, and came across a family consisting of a single mother and six children, one of whom has been diagnosed with down-syndrome. The lady, Ms. Brissa Gonzalez, lives in the outskirts of town in a very humble dwelling. Due to her limited resources and motherly duty of looking after her six children, she finds it difficult to manage all her responsibilities, including the up keep of her yard. On Saturday, December 16, around 10 am, the team arrived at Ms. Brissa Gonzalez's home. The team took donated food supplies for the family and offered mowing services to cut and clean the yard. They were received with warm greetings by Ms. Brissa and her kids, who were very appreciative of their gesture.

BSI's security department feels proud and blessed to have carried out this very humble project and are sure that this is the beginning of many more projects to come. The team looks forward to bringing more joy into other homes and is certain that "It's better to give than to receive."

## VIEWS ON THIS PUBLICATION?

Contact us. Send ideas, thoughts and suggestions to:

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**Contact BSI's Hotline & Farmer Number at: 670-0041**

*We want to hear from you! Let us know what you want in your newsletter.*

