MEDIA RELEASE

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*Caption: Case IH Step UP! Conference delegates learned about the latest Case IH machinery and how it can fit into their sugar operations.*

**Cane farmers Step Up to next generation of knowledge**

After a highly successful inaugural event in 2013, the second Case IH Step UP! Conference was held at Palm Cove in Queensland on March 17th and 18th.

The conference, organised by Next Gen – the industry body for young sugar cane professionals – was a chance for young and established farmers, millers, researchers and harvesting contractors to discuss and learn about innovation, sustainability and profitability.

Gerard Puglisi, Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA) Next Gen Officer, said, “It’s fantastic that a big global brand like Case IH sees the value in young people in agriculture, and we are very grateful for Case IH’s continued support. Without the support from sponsors like Case IH, the Next Gen program would not be where it is today.”

Held over two days at a premier Queensland beach resort, the family-friendly Case IH Step UP! Conference featured exciting, progressive content.

Attendees could also go on two field trips: touring Cairns Sugar Terminal and nitrogen trials in the region; and Sweet Farm Tours, a fourth-generation cane farm that also grows vanilla beans and is home to one of Australia’s only cocoa plantations.

Twelve speakers addressed a range of topics, including best farming practice, precision farming, marketing, R&D, agricultural engineering and technology, and financial products and planning.

One of the event’s guest speakers was Ken Ohnell, Case IH’s North American High Horsepower Specialist, who was visiting from the USA as part of Case IH’s national Red Power Tour.

Ken spoke about upcoming technologies and machinery, and with a range of Case IH machinery on display, also hosted a product walk around, explaining how innovations and developments on Case IH equipment are specifically suited to sugar cane farming.

“For instance, some of our latest technology has flotation provided by the tracks on the Magnum that allow the tractor to get into cane fields sooner with more traction and less compaction, and don’t make divots or scuffing when turning around.

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“I’m proud to have been part of this event because it’s a very practical way to show how Case IH is supporting the young generation of sugar cane producers.”

ACFA’s Gerard Puglisi said, “Case IH Step UP! 2015 allows both young and established farmers, millers, researchers and harvesting contractors, from all regions of Australia’s sugar industry, to gather under one roof to discuss the topics that matter most to us. It creates a platform for an open, honest discussion between all industry stakeholders. It is also a chance for young people to share ideas and knowledge to ensure a profitable and sustainable future.”

Gerard said prior to 2013, the sugar industry had not seen an event like the Case IH Step UP! Conference.

“Gathering young industry participants together for three days to discuss a wide range of topics – including machinery, best farming practice, sugar marketing, finance, R&D and succession planning – was definitely a first. There is an overwhelming desire out there from young people to take the reins of their industry.

“Since the 2013 event, Next Gen’s network of young people has grown substantially, and industry-wide support is evident now more than ever with major industry stakeholders taking part in the conference. We saw a lot of new faces at this year’s event, as well as old friends, which is really encouraging.

“This year we had more exhibitors and a finely tuned program, which allowed delegates to interact with key industry leaders.”

For more information visit [www.nextgenfarmer.com](http://www.nextgenfarmer.com).

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