

## **AN AUSTRALIAN SUGAR CANE HARVESTER DESIGN COMPETITION**

AUTHOR: ADRIAN WONE

When Australia ceased to manufacture sugar cane harvesters it also lost an important ability to stay competitive and continues to fall behind its competitors in this and every other aspect of sugar cane culture.

The sugar cane industry worldwide is experiencing many new challenges and it is important that we have the ability to adjust to these changes rapidly. Australia has a proven track record in world leading sugar cane harvesting technology and it is still possible to reestablish this situation.

To be competitive, the Australian sugar cane industry needs to be more innovative than the competition. A more efficient, more versatile, more modern sugar cane harvester will make a significant difference to the competitiveness stakes.

One possible way to achieve this outcome is for the Government to organise a sugar cane harvester design competition for Australian contributors; having a cash prize for the successful entrant as well as providing funding to build a prototype machine for evaluation. The successful entrant would be eligible to bid for the prototype construction contract.

Provision could be made to grade the prize pool. For example: best complete harvester design: best chopping system: best base cutting system: best cleaning system: best feed system. etc. Some complete designs may have some individual aspects of an operation that may be superior to a competing design. In this way all the very best innovations can be utilised and brought together on the final product.

Having proven the prototype in the field the next step would be to find an Australian manufacturer who would possibly licence the design and manufacture

for the Australian market.

There are many different ways to proceed and lots of safeguards to build in to the final design.

There is a big opportunity here to assist the sugarcane industry to evolve and prosper into a new era of efficiency and new value added products.