



# Harvesting YCS-affected cane

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Sugar Research  
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The following information has been prepared to address the concerns of growers with YCS-affected crops and help with farming operation decisions as the harvesting season approaches.

## ► 2013 crush outcome

It has been difficult to assign yield losses solely to YCS except in cases where blocks were severely affected and where repeated waves of yellowing were observed over an extended period of time.

In these blocks yield reductions of between 30-70 per cent were measured. It should be noted that these severely impacted fields represented a very small percentage of the fields that expressed symptoms. Based upon our data, in less impacted fields (the vast majority) yield losses of 0-15 per cent were more typical.

Some growers have reported that fields affected last year have not shown YCS symptoms, while others report that YCS is present again.

## ► Should I harvest my YCS-affected blocks first or leave them until later in the season?

Although CCS levels appeared to be lower in severely affected cane early in the 2013 crush, the levels improved as the crush continued. Little if any apparent losses of CCS were recorded as the season progressed.

If you are concerned about the possible CCS levels in an affected block we suggest that you submit samples to your mill to identify the exact CCS levels. If the levels are low you may wish to leave the cane in the field until mid-season to see if the CCS levels improve.

Consider your whole-of-farm management plan when deciding which cane blocks to harvest. If you delay cutting a particular block or blocks, this may impact on your other farming operations and the ploughing out of blocks to be fallowed that year.

## ► Should I plough out my YCS-affected blocks?

Observations on a number of farms have found that YCS-affected crops which were harvested last year went on to ratoon well this year.

Ploughing out of blocks prematurely could impact on your crop rotation and may be an unwarranted cost to your farming business.

## ► Does YCS affect the millability of cane?

In some cases severely affected cane may have smaller stalks than healthy cane. This does not impact the way the cane is processed through the mill.

► I have YCS-affected blocks on my farm. I am concerned that if they have a poor root system the plant will be damaged during harvesting.

There is no evidence to date that links YCS with poor root systems. Good harvest practices should always be followed to ensure stools are left undamaged for future ratoons.

► Can YCS be spread to other blocks in my farm, or other farms on the harvester?

YCS is not caused by any known pest or disease therefore whether or not it can spread via a harvester between blocks or farms is still unknown.

We recommend that as part of your standard harvesting operations that good harvester hygiene is followed.

This involves maintaining equipment hygiene and sterilising the harvester between blocks, to minimise the risk of ratoon stunting disease.

► Should the harvester be set up differently for YCS-affected blocks?

YCS-affected blocks should be harvested in the same way as non-affected blocks, unless a known poor root system exists for some other reason.

If your crops are known to have a poor root system you need to flag this with your harvester operator.



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