



Sugar Research
Australia

ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN

2026/27 SUMMARY



Sugar Research
Australia

Sugar Research Australia Limited

Brisbane Office Suite A Level 10, 300 Queen St, Brisbane QLD 4000 Australia
Postal Address PO Box 133, Brisbane Qld 4001 Australia

P 07 3331 3314
E sra@sugarresearch.com.au
W sugarresearch.com.au

ABN 16 163 670 068 | ISSN 2203-7705

Acknowledgements

Sugar Research Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Australia’s sugarcane growing regions. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to Country, culture and community.

We also acknowledge the growers, millers, researchers, industry partners, staff, government agencies and communities who have contributed to SRA’s work throughout 2025/26. Their knowledge, collaboration and commitment continue to strengthen research, development and adoption for a productive, profitable and resilient Australian sugarcane industry.

We acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), State Government partners, in particular the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) and all industry stakeholders who generously shared their time, insights and expertise throughout the reporting period.

This input is instrumental in shaping the work delivered by SRA, ensuring it reflects shared priorities, practical realities and a collective commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes for the Australian sugar industry.

SRA acknowledges and thanks its investors, including levy payers (sugarcane growers and millers), the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Government, and all industry partners.



Numbers in charts and tables included in this report may be affected by rounding.

© Copyright 2026 by Sugar Research Australia Limited. All rights reserved. No part of this publication, may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Sugar Research Australia Limited. Sugar Research Australia Limited acknowledges and thanks its funding providers, including levy payers (sugarcane growers and millers), the Commonwealth Government, and the Queensland Government (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries). Disclaimer: In this disclaimer a reference to ‘SRA’, ‘we’, ‘us’ or ‘our’ means Sugar Research Australia Limited and our directors, officers, agents and employees. Although we do our very best to present information that is correct and accurate, we make no warranties, guarantees or representations about the suitability, reliability, currency or accuracy of the information we present in this publication, for any purposes. Subject to any terms implied by law and which cannot be excluded, we accept no responsibility for any loss, damage, cost or expense incurred by you as a result of the use of, or reliance on, any materials and information appearing in this publication. You, the user, accept sole responsibility and risk associated with the use and results of the information appearing in this publication, and you agree that we will not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever (including through negligence) arising out of, or in connection with the use of this publication. We recommend that you contact our staff before acting on any information provided in this publication. Warning: Our tests, inspections and recommendations should not be relied on without further, independent inquiries. They may not be accurate, complete or applicable for your particular needs for many reasons, including (for example) SRA being unaware of other matters relevant to individual crops, the analysis of unrepresentative samples or the influence of environmental, managerial or other factors on production.



CONTENTS

SRA Delivery Priorities 2026/27 3

Our Aim..... 3

Our Priorities..... 4

What Supports Delivery 4

2026/27 Delivery Schedule 5

How Delivery Is Changing In 2026/27 7

Where We Are Investing 9

How We Will Measure And Report Progress 10

SRA DELIVERY PRIORITIES 2026/27

OUR AIM AND PRIORITIES

OUR AIM

Strive to lift industry productivity by

10% by 2031

from around 89 to 98 tonnes of cane per hectare (TCH).



OUR PRIORITIES

The 2026/27 targets below are the first-year commitments under SRA's Strategic Plan 2026-2031. They represent the initial steps towards the longer-term outcomes SRA has committed to deliver by 2031.

SRA has three key focus areas: developing better varieties, tackling priority crop-protection problems and getting proven solutions into practical use faster.



1. BETTER VARIETIES

Develop better-performing varieties faster, with stronger evidence they will perform under commercial conditions.

2026/27 targets:

- **Genomic-based breeding.** Genotype 5,000 clones to help identify promising varieties earlier.
- **Phenotyping.** Test priority drone, near-infrared (NIR) and AI phenotyping tools that could improve how quickly and accurately promising varieties are assessed.
- **Trial optimisation for commercial performance.** Complete trial-costing model and recommend how trials can be improved to better reflect regional and commercial growing conditions including ratoon performance.
- **Assess genetic modification (GM).** Assess export market acceptance, regulation, IP and value propositions, and define the next decision point.



2. STRONGER CROP PROTECTION

Protect productivity and cane supply by progressing solutions to the pests, diseases, weeds and biosecurity threats that matter most to industry.

2026/27 targets:

- **Develop solutions for priority endemic pests, diseases and weeds.** Deliver agreed 2026/27 milestones across six priority projects¹.
- **Fast-track alternatives to at-risk controls.** Deliver agreed 2026/27 milestones across two projects to develop alternatives to imidacloprid and paraquat.
- **Strengthen preparedness for exotic threats.** Deliver agreed 2026/27 milestones across five priority biosecurity projects².



3. ACCELERATE ADOPTION

Get proven solutions into practical use faster by validating what works locally and scaling delivery through trusted industry partners.

2026/27 targets:

- **District Impact Plans.** Establish plans for each region, setting out local priorities, actions and measures including commercial validation of priority practices and varieties³.
- **Agonomic packages.** Develop packages for priority varieties, linking variety choice with the best-practice management needed for performance.
- **Partner delivery capability.** Confirm partner roles and delivery channels and identify capability needs for 2027/28.
- **Clean seed and tissue culture.** Establish a clean seed baseline and priority actions to increase access and use, and complete tissue culture due diligence and design of a 2027/28 pilot.

WHAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Delivery across all three focus areas is supported by:

Grower reach and engagement | Transparency and accountability | People and capability
Data and digital capability | Financial sustainability

These commitments support the longer-term priorities and outcomes in SRA's Strategic Plan 2026-2031. View the full [Strategic Plan](#) for the long-term priorities and 2031 outcomes.

¹ Priority endemic issues include canegrubs, soldier fly, Pachymetra, Ratoon Stunting Disease, nematodes and weeds.
² Exotic-threat work includes preparedness for Sugarcane Streak Mosaic Virus and White Leaf disease, improved diagnostics, biosecurity planning and surveillance capability.
³ District priorities may include variety performance, crop protection, irrigation, soil and disease management, clean planting material and harvest losses.

2026/27 DELIVERY SCHEDULE

Delivery occurs throughout the year. The schedule below shows the major milestones and decision points for SRA's 2026/27 priorities. Detailed project milestones are tracked internally and used to manage delivery and reporting.

PRIORITY AND 2026/27 TARGET	Jul - Sep 2026	Oct - Dec 2026	Jan - Mar 2027	Apr - Jun 2027
BETTER VARIETIES				
Genomic-based breeding Target: Genotype 5,000 clones.	Genomics program underway.	Identify the field clones to be genotyped.	Harvest and prepare leaf samples for DNA extraction.	Extract DNA and submit samples for genotyping.
Phenotyping Target: Validate priority drone, NIR and AI tools for agreed traits.	Validation program underway.	Confirm the best drone flight approach for collecting trial data. Update prediction models for five core traits and assess their accuracy.	Develop a genomic prediction model for one new trait and complete validation.	
Trial optimisation for commercial performance Target: Develop the trial-costing model, assess trial scenarios and recommend the pathway forward.	Trial-optimisation work underway.	Analyse trial environments to identify the main production environments and best-performing lines. Complete the trial-costing model.	Assess trial scenarios and develop the recommended pathway forward.	Prepare 30 common lines for 2027 field testing and complete the recommended pathway forward.
Assess GM Target: Complete the 2026/27 stage of due diligence and define the next decision point.	Due diligence work underway.	Conduct stakeholder engagement to assess potential market acceptance, industry appetite and pathway forward.	Develop papers on value proposition for specific traits. Develop costing scenarios for a user-pays system to assess value proposition.	Complete decision point ⁴ . If proceeding: re-establish regulatory pathways with the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR).

⁴ This milestone represents a decision point for GM due diligence. Further regulatory work, including re-establishing OGTR pathways, will proceed only if the decision is made to continue the due diligence process.



PRIORITY AND 2026/27 TARGET	Jul - Sep 2026	Oct - Dec 2026	Jan - Mar 2027	Apr - Jun 2027
STRONGER CROP PROTECTION				
Develop solutions for priority endemic pests, diseases and weeds Target: All six priority projects achieve their agreed milestones on time and within approved scope and budget.	Testing, validation and early-stage research underway across the six priority projects, including canegrub biopesticide research, RSD detection and soilborne disease screening.	Progress testing and validation, including RSD detection at mills and weed management guidelines for mill mud users.	Continue testing of the canegrub biopesticide and review results to inform the next stage of development.	Complete major 2026/27 testing and validation including work on Fusarium, Pachymetra, soilborne disease screening and weed management, and confirm next steps across the six projects.
Fast-track alternatives to at-risk controls Target: Both priority projects achieve their agreed milestones on time and within approved scope and budget.	Validation underway for alternatives to imidacloprid and paraquat. No major milestones due.	Complete scheduled validation milestones for alternative canegrub insecticides and weed-control methods.	Continue validation and review results. No major milestones due.	Complete remaining validation and confirm next steps for alternative controls.
Strengthen preparedness for exotic threats. Target: Deliver agreed 2026/27 milestones across five priority biosecurity projects ⁵ .	Progress biosecurity planning, research, diagnostics and surveillance capability.	Deliver scheduled research and preparedness milestones, including work on exotic disease threats and surveillance tools.	Continue research and validation of diagnostic, surveillance and preparedness tools. No major milestones due.	Complete major 2026/27 research and validation milestones across the five priority projects and confirm next steps.
FASTER ADOPTION				
District Impact Plans Target: Establish plans for each region, setting out local priorities, actions and measures, including commercial validation of priority practices and varieties.	Establish the governance approach and agreed local priorities, partners and accountabilities.	Confirm the priority practices and varieties requiring commercial validation, and begin planning with district partners.	Confirm initial validation sites, hosts and evidence requirements.	Implement District Impact Plans, establish routine progress reporting and confirm next steps for commercial validation.
Agronomic packages Target: Develop packages for priority varieties, linking variety choice with the best-practice management needed for performance.	Confirm the priority varieties to be covered.	Agree the minimum content and format for the packages.	Complete draft packages for the priority varieties.	Finalise the packages and identify 2027/28 local-validation needs.
Partner delivery capability Target: Confirm partner roles and delivery channels and identify capability needs for 2027/28.	Identify priority delivery partners and current delivery channels.	Agree partner roles and accountabilities for delivering priority solutions.	Identify capability needs and practical training and field-based learning requirements.	Finalise the 2027/28 partner capability and delivery approach.
Clean seed and tissue culture Target: Establish a clean seed baseline and priority actions to increase access and use, and complete tissue culture due diligence and design of a 2027/28 pilot.	Clean seed and tissue culture work underway.	Define clean seed measures and data sources and agree the criteria for the tissue culture assessment.	Establish the clean seed baseline, assess feasible tissue culture delivery models and develop the pilot design.	Embed priority clean seed actions into District Impact Plans and finalise the tissue culture pilot, including criteria to scale, redesign or stop.

⁵ Exotic-threat work includes preparedness for Sugarcane Streak Mosaic Virus and White Leaf disease, improved diagnostics, biosecurity planning and surveillance capability.

HOW DELIVERY IS CHANGING IN 2026/27

Alongside the specific commitments outlined in the Delivery Schedule, SRA is changing how it develops, tests and delivers solutions to strengthen evidence, improve decision-making and get proven solutions into industry faster.



1. BETTER VARIETIES

SRA is modernising the variety development program to develop better varieties faster and give growers stronger evidence that new varieties will perform under local commercial conditions.

What will change in 2026/27?

- ✓ **Stronger commercial and regional testing.** Improve testing across regions and commercial conditions, including performance through to fourth ratoon.
- ✓ **Stronger release decisions.** Use clearer benchmarks and better commercial evidence before varieties are released.
- ✓ **Faster genetic improvement.** Use genomics, phenotyping and data analysis to identify better parents and promising clones earlier and speed up improvement in new varieties.
- ✓ **Better information for growers.** Improve local commercial performance data so growers and advisers can make more informed decisions about which varieties to plant and how to manage them.



2. FOCUSED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

SRA is refocusing R&D investment on the most pressing problems that matter most to industry right now, with clearer decisions about which technologies should progress, change, partner or stop.

What will change in 2026/27?

- ✓ **Sharper investment focus.** New research will increasingly focus on crop protection and pre-breeding, while agronomy and farming-systems investment shifts towards technologies closer to commercial testing and use.
- ✓ **Clearer investment decisions.** Use milestones and decision points to progress, redesign, partner, pause or stop investments based on the evidence, likely industry value and whether there is a practical pathway for adoption by growers.
- ✓ **More partnerships and co-investment.** Work with government, universities, RDCs, research organisations and commercial partners to bring in capability, reduce duplication and accelerate delivery.

Existing commitments will continue where there is a clear case for industry value, while future investment will become increasingly focused on SRA's strategic priorities.



3. ACCELERATE ADOPTION

SRA is shifting towards more locally-led delivery, stronger commercial validation and greater use of trusted industry partners to get proven solutions into use faster.

What will change in 2026/27?

- ✓ **More locally-led delivery.** District Impact Plans will set clear local priorities, actions, partners and measures for each cane-growing region.
- ✓ **Test under commercial conditions.** Priority varieties, practices and technologies will be tested under real district conditions before decisions are made to scale, refine or stop.
- ✓ **Scale through trusted partners.** SRA will work more closely with productivity services, mills, advisers and other local industry partners to extend proven solutions.
- ✓ **Focus on practical district priorities.** Activity will respond to local needs such as variety performance, crop protection, irrigation, soil and disease management, clean planting material and harvest losses.

Scale of delivery in 2026/27



100,000+
new clones
developed



12,000+
new trial
plots planted



Disease response
assessed for
6 priority diseases



100+
clones assessed
for quality

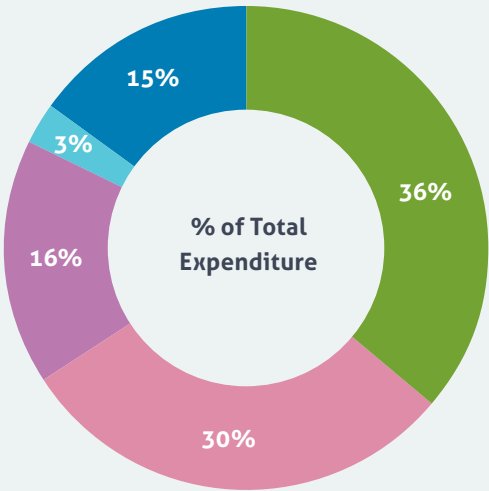


10 new
clones progressed
to commercial
assessment

WHERE WE ARE INVESTING⁶

SRA plans to invest \$37.4 million in 2026/27. Around 82% of expenditure is directed to varieties, crop protection and other R&D, and adoption.

INVESTMENT BY AREA



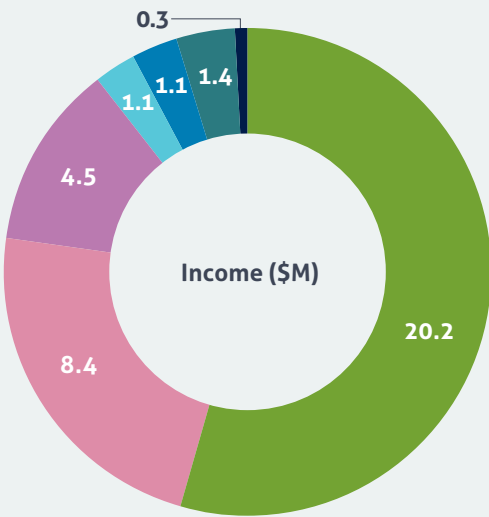
2026/27 Budget (\$M)	
Varieties	13.6
Crop protection and other R&D	11.1
Adoption	6.1
Strategic enablers ⁷	1.0
Corporate and administrative	5.6
TOTAL	37.4

As existing projects are completed, more investment will progressively shift towards the Strategic Plan priorities of better varieties, crop protection and adoption.

WHERE DOES OUR INCOME COME FROM?

Forecast income in 2026/27 is \$37.1 million including 54% from industry levies, 23% from Australian Government matching contributions and 12% from Queensland Government funding. The remaining 11% comes from grants, commercial, financial and other income.

Forecast expenditure is \$37.4 million, around \$0.3 million above forecast income. This planned difference will be monitored through SRA's budget and forecasting process.



Income (\$M)	
Industry Levy	20.2
Commonwealth Government Matching Contribution	8.4
Queensland Government Department of Primary Industries Contribution	4.5
Grant Income	1.1
Commercial and Operating Income	1.1
Financial Income	1.4
Other Income	0.3
TOTAL	37.1

⁶ Numbers may be affected by rounding.
⁷ Including communications and engagement, data and digital capability, and performance reporting.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE AND REPORT PROGRESS

SRA will track delivery against clear targets, milestones, due dates and accountabilities, and report regularly on successes and when delivery is at risk.

How progress will be reported

- ✓ **Clear commitments.** Priorities will be tracked against agreed targets, milestones, measures and dates.
- ✓ **Simple status reporting.** Progress will be reported as: On track, At risk or Complete.
- ✓ **Problems stay visible.** If delivery is at risk or delayed, the original due date will remain visible, together with the reason, action being taken, and expected completion date.
- ✓ **Regular review.** Key milestones will be reviewed by SRA's Senior Leadership Team, with progress reported quarterly to the Board.
- ✓ **External reporting.** SRA will publish quarterly updates so growers, millers and government can see what has been delivered, what is off track and what happens next.

Where to see more

SRA will publish further information on its website including:

- **Quarterly delivery updates** showing what has been delivered, what is at risk and what happens next.
- **District Impact Plans** showing local priorities and monthly progress in each district.
- **R&D Portfolio Overview** showing the projects SRA is investing in, where they sit in the development pipeline and the next major decision points.

See current delivery progress at:
www.sugarresearch.com.au





Sugar Research
Australia

Sugar Research Australia Limited

ABN 16 163 670 068

Brisbane Office Suite A Level 10, 300 Queen Street Brisbane QLD 4001 Australia

Postal Address PO Box 133 Brisbane QLD 4068 Australia

T 07 3331 3314

E sra@sugarresearch.com.au

sugarresearch.com.au