A newly released fungicide has proven effective in controlling both sugarcane smut and pineapple disease. This will provide a measure of sugarcane smut protection whilst we await the development of additional resistant cane varieties.

Smut was first detected near Childers in Queensland in 2006 and has since spread on the wind to all commercial cane production regions in Queensland and New South Wales. It remains the most significant disease of the cane industry, causing yield losses in the order of 20 to 30 per cent.

Crop Care has worked closely with BSES over a number of years, to develop effective treatment options which reduce production losses in sugarcane.

The result is Sinker fungicide which contains flutriafol, a highly soluble and systemic active ingredient, which has proven to be highly effective in controlling both sugarcane smut and pineapple disease while protecting yields.

Pineapple disease is caused by a soil-borne fungus, common in all sugarcane regions throughout the world. The fungus rots the setts used as plant cane and prevents germination which in turn reduces the plant stand and resulting yield potential.

Both primary and secondary infection control

Rob Walker, Business Manager for Crop Care’s fungicide range, said Sinker was a breakthrough for cane growers, preventing primary infections of these diseases and reducing their yield impact on the cane industry.

“Our research and development work with BSES Limited over the past seven years has shown that Sinker provides robust control of primary infections of sugarcane smut and pineapple disease,” says Rob.

“Trials have also consistently demonstrated that Sinker significantly reduces secondary infection of sugarcane smut, which normally occurs around five months after planting, as the active ingredient is highly systemic.

“The trials have shown that when applied to setts at planting, Sinker provides at least 130 days’ protection from sugarcane smut infection.”

While the industry is developing new sugarcane varieties that are resistant to sugarcane smut, this will take several years to
achieve. In the meantime, Sinker provides a management tool to reduce yield losses in cane varieties with only partial resistance to sugarcane smut, while also providing highly effective protection against pineapple disease.

**FIGURE 1:** The Sinker treatment led to significant yield increases compared with diseased plant material (untreated, inoculated) and disease-free (untreated, un-inoculated) plant material.

**FIGURE 2:** In this trial fungicides were put to severe test as conditions were cold and wet after a late winter planting. Sinker at 500mL/ha (250g ai/ha) out-performed other commercially available fungicides for pineapple disease control with a significant increase in bud germination. The untreated inoculated treatment clearly shows the detrimental impact pineapple disease can have on bud germination.

Sinker fungicide will assist farmers to tackle diseases such as sugarcane smut (pictured) and pineapple disease. (Source BSES Woodford, Qld)