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India, Australia partner to foster sugar research

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Singapore: Sugar Research Australia recently announced a new research partnership with India to further research and foster the development of new sugarcane varieties. The team aims to focus on genetic markers for common concerns in sugarcane breeding like drought resistance, sugar content, cane yield and a disease called red-rot.

The project has been awarded more than $600,000 through the Commonwealth Government's Australia-India Strategic Research fund. SRA executive manager of technologies, Mr Peter Allsop, said the project will focus on taking some of the field results and mapping them back to the genetics within the sugarcane plant.

Mr Allsop said India and Australia shared common concerns with respect to sugarcane breeding. He added, "It is the second-biggest producer of sugar in the world, so it is a massive industry and they have a lot of experience with different varieties to what we have."

The collaboration and research, Mr Allsop said, will benefit the entire spectrum of the sugarcane industry, from growers to mills. Improving the water efficiency of cane varieties for Australian growers will also be another major focus area of the collaboration. "Water is expensive in itself and also in the electricity that you need to get it there, so we also focus on making the product water efficient."