

Performance Report

2025-26



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Acknowledgement of Country

Dairy Australia acknowledges the role of First Nations peoples and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

Introduction

Over the past year, I've spent time on farms and at industry events, listening to farmers talk about the opportunities they're pursuing, the pressures they're facing and how Dairy Australia can best support them. These conversations, together with broader industry consultation and the findings of the Independent Review of Performance, have reinforced the need to focus our effort and investment on the outcomes that will have the biggest impact for farm businesses.

The 2025-26 financial year was the first year of delivering the 2030 Strategic Plan. The plan provides clear priorities and measurable industry goals, giving us a stronger basis for deciding where Dairy Australia can make the greatest contribution to farm profitability and productivity. This Performance Report sets out what we delivered during the year, where we made progress and where further work and investment is needed.

During the first year of the new strategy, we delivered practical services, research and industry initiatives across our three strategic priorities. In this transition year, results against the Performance Scorecard were mixed, with some measures progressing well and others requiring greater focus and investment.

More than 64% of Australian dairy farmers participated in at least one Dairy Australia activity or event or used a Dairy Australia resource during the year. Importantly, 65% of participating farmers reported taking action because of the information, support or services they received. For us, that is one of the clearest indicators that our work is helping to support decisions and drive improvements on farm where it matters most to farmers.

We continued to strengthen farmers' ability to develop business plans and make more informed decisions. Participation in Our Farm Our Plan grew, the new program Cash, Costs & Margins was piloted ahead of a national rollout, and use of DairyBase expanded. These services are providing farmers with practical insights to benchmark performance, identify opportunities and make data-driven decisions with more confidence.

While we've made good progress in supporting farmers to unlock potential in their businesses, we recognise that there is more work to be done, particularly to strengthen the way we work with our regional partners.

The Regional Development Program (RDP) structure is unique to dairy, and we'll continue to collaborate so that together we can deliver a proud and successful industry that celebrates dairy and strengthens communities.

Several major research investments reached important milestones, providing new evidence to guide future farm decisions and industry investment. Results from DairyHIGH 2 demonstrated that high pasture and milk production could be maintained while significantly reducing synthetic nitrogen fertiliser use. ReproRefresh, DairyUP and DairyBio Animals 21-26 also delivered new insights and tools to support future success in herd productivity, fertility, longevity and future genetic gain. This included the introduction of Sire Stillbirth and Maternal Stillbirth Australian Breeding Values, giving farmers new tools to reduce stillbirths and improve calf survival.

After listening to feedback from farmers and the Independent Review of Performance, we adjusted the balance of future feed and herd productivity research, increasing the focus on management practices and more timely outcomes for farmers.

Our ability to respond quickly was tested when global supply chain disruption created uncertainty around fuel and fertiliser. We provided national webinars, regional sessions, practical resources and current analysis to support farm business decisions. We also worked with governments and industry partners so the potential impacts on dairy farm businesses were understood in policy response and planning.

Beyond the farm gate, Dairy Australia partnered with Australian Dairy Farmers and Australian Dairy Products Federation, contributing evidence-based insights and analysis to inform 39 policy submissions.

With 32% of Australian milk finding its way into export markets, we continued to strengthen Australian dairy's position as a sustainable industry in key international markets through our unique export market development initiatives. Community trust in Australian dairy remained strong at 86%, reflecting the combined efforts of farmers, processors and industry organisations to engage openly with the community and showcase the sustainable practices that farmers do every day.

Alongside our achievements, the year reinforced some important opportunities for the future.

We maintained a disciplined approach to Dairy Australia's resources. Stronger milk production increased levy revenue, while careful allocation of resources and the completion of several major projects contributed to an operating surplus of approximately \$2.55 million. This provides capacity for considered investment in the priorities of Strategic Plan 2030, allowing us to focus resources on the initiatives most likely to advance our industry goals and deliver meaningful impact for dairy farmers and their businesses.

While we now have a solid and focussed strategy, we also have to reckon with a rising cost base. In the coming year, Dairy Australia will continue to focus on how we make sure our resources are applied to the right areas to achieve our strategic goals. This will require tough decisions about how we invest our levy funds in our people and our projects to deliver the best value for farmers.

In the year ahead, we will continue improving how we measure success, strengthening the connection between research and practice change, and making every dollar count by ensuring our resources are focused on delivering outcomes that matter to farmers.

Thank you to the many farmers, partners, researchers, service providers, industry leaders and Dairy Australia team members who contributed throughout the year. Your expertise, feedback and commitment continue to shape a stronger future for Australian dairy.



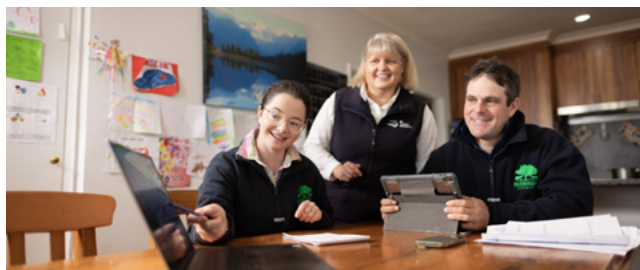
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matthew Shaffer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Matthew Shaffer Chief Executive Officer



Key achievements in 2025-26

Unlocking today's potential



1.1 Uplifting farm business performance

- Expanded farm business decision support through DairyBase, which now supports more than 3,200 registered users, 19,610 farm datasets and 6,140 carbon calculator datasets.
- Enabled 168 farmers to make more informed decisions about the future of their business through first-time participation in Our Farm Our Plan.

1.2 Enhancing farm operations

- Equipped farmers to make on-farm improvements, with 64% of dairy farmers participating in at least one Dairy Australia activity, event or resource during 2025-26, and 65% of those reported taking action to do things differently because of the information or support received.
- Deepened farmer engagement and service planning, with 73% of all farmers engaging with the Farm Engagement team, identifying priority areas of focus for their farm which then inform regional and national priorities.

1.3 Creating pathways for people

- Piloted the Dairy Capability Guide across 15 farm businesses of varying sizes and systems across six regions with good feedback received to inform implementation.
- Built leadership capability on farm by delivering the Second-in-Charge (2IC) program to 130 participants across Western Victoria, Gippsland, Murray, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia. Over 90% of participants reported high satisfaction.
- Assisted with over 280 farmer enquiries relating to industrial relations and human resources.

Innovating for future success



2.1 Building feedbase productivity

- DairyHIGH 2 research showed farmers could reduce annual nitrogen fertiliser use by 50% while maintaining milk production.
- Awareness of the Forage Value Index among farmers increased from 52% to 69% between 2023 and 2026, accompanied by increased use of the tool by farmers and advisors in ryegrass variety selection.
- Delivered new feedbase research insights across regions, including forage crop rotations, kikuyu grazing management and irrigated pasture systems.

2.2 Building herd productivity

- Delivered new breeding tools to support calf health, cow survival, fertility, health, heat tolerance, feed efficiency and herd productivity, with over 62,000 genomic tests completed.
- Identified factors associated with cows remaining in the herd, including links between omega-3 blood lipid profiles and lower culling risk in older cows.
- Grew capability to improve reproductive performance through the Repro Refresh project, informed by analysis of 1,202 herds.

2.3 Adapting to a changing operating environment

- Engaged more than 700 farmers and service providers through national workshops on understanding farm carbon, with 159 farmers completing one-to-one consultations to calculate their farm carbon number.
- Improved access to practical effluent management expertise and guidance through updated resources, collaboration on revised Victorian Effluent Guidelines and delivery of the Design of Livestock Effluent Systems course.

Ensuring a sustainable industry



3.1 Advancing industry sustainability

- Strengthened Australian dairy's competitiveness and market access through the 2025 Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework Scorecard, updated Animal Care Commitments, and 39 policy submissions with Australian Dairy Industry Council.
- Strengthened industry resilience by providing timely insights, guidance and preparedness support during H5 avian influenza and fuel and fertiliser disruptions, helping farmers and industry make informed decisions and respond confidently to emerging risks.

3.2 Remaining locally and globally competitive

- Protected and enhanced opportunities for Australian dairy exports through coordinated market development, trade policy, technical market access and market intelligence activities.
- Enhanced Australia's strategic positioning in China by combining sustainability leadership, market intelligence and trusted industry relationships to support future dairy trade, influence and competitiveness.
- Supported farm business decision-making through economic analysis and an intensive dairy housed systems webinar attended by more than 100 dairy industry participants.

3.3 Driving community trust and support

- Maintained strong community trust in Australia's dairy industry, with 86% of Australians expressing trust in the sector, supported through farmer ambassador activities, school education, community engagement and consumer campaigns.
- Contributed towards an increase in the proportion of Australians making an effort to consume dairy every day to 59%, up from 56% the previous year, supported by nutrition research, health professional engagement and evidence-based health campaign.



Our industry goals

Working closely with industry, Dairy Australia has identified an overarching goal to ensure dairy farms achieve competitive returns on total assets (ROTA) of five to six per cent. This is supported by four industry goals that describe the outcomes we are aiming to achieve for the majority of dairy farms.

These industry goals were first published in February 2026. Updated data on our progress against industry goals will be shared in Dairy Australia's 2027-28 Performance Report.



Increase profitability

The majority of dairy farms improve earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) by 30 cents per kilogram of milk solids.

Measurement

Five-year rolling weighted average EBIT/kgMS

Baseline

A\$2.27

Target

A\$2.57

Key drivers

- Strong farmgate milk prices helped support profitability across most regions in 2025-26.
- Generally favourable seasonal conditions and lower feed costs improved margins in many dairy businesses.
- Ongoing volatility in fertiliser, water and energy costs continued to influence business performance.
- Adoption of farm business planning, benchmarking and financial management tools supported more informed decision-making.



Increase feed productivity

The majority of dairy farms increase homegrown feed utilisation per milking hectare by one tonne.

Measurement

Five-year rolling weighted average tDM/ha

Baseline

7.34

Target

8.34

Key drivers

- Favourable autumn/early winter conditions in 2026 supported higher pasture growth and feed availability in most regions.
- Continued extension focus on grazing management, forage quality and feed utilisation has helped improve the value derived from homegrown feed.
- Ongoing investment in feedbase research, along with the introduction of virtual fencing, is strengthening the opportunity for future gains in feed productivity.
- Upcoming research will explore how virtual fencing can improve pasture utilisation and unlock greater value from homegrown feed.



Increase herd productivity

The majority of dairy farms increase genetic gain by \$90 per cow entering the herd.

Measurement

National average Balanced Performance Index (BPI) \$ per cow

Baseline

A\$197

Target

A\$287

Key drivers

- Continued investment in DataGene to support genetic improvement across the Australian dairy industry.
- Uptake of genomic testing and breeding tools to support more informed herd improvement decisions.
- Increased use of the Balanced Performance Index and Australian Breeding Values to drive ongoing genetic gain.
- Investment in new sensor-based phenotypic measurements through the DairyBio 3 Lifting Predictive Power project to maintain the strength and longevity of the Australian genetic evaluation system as herd recording declines.



While remaining focused on sustainable practices

Every farmer increases the proportion of first calving heifers reaching their third lactation and beyond by 12%.

Measurement

National average percentage of heifers reaching third lactation and beyond

Baseline

64%

Target

72%

Key drivers

- Investment in genetic improvement through DataGene and DairyBio 3 to drive better sire selection and female genomic testing decisions to increase genetic basis of heifer performance, fertility and longevity.
- Investment in Rearing Healthy Calves and Heifers on Target, plus new pinkeye research, to ensure replacements reach weight at first calving targets.
- Investment in InCalf reproductive management, mastitis and facial eczema prevention and data-informed disease monitoring to reduce involuntary culling.
- Investing in Transition Cow Management and First 100 Days lactation extension, as well as DairyFeedbase projects to minimise early lactation disease risk and increase fertility through nutritional management.

Unlocking today's potential

Sub-priorities

- 1.1 Uplifting farm business performance
- 1.2 Enhancing farm operations
- 1.3 Creating pathways for people



Purpose

Strengthening farm business performance by supporting informed decision-making, farm practice change and people.

Investment: \$18.1 million

External investment \$1.10m	
Major funding partners	2025-26 contribution
Table includes selected funding partners and does not represent all external investment contributions.	
Western Dairy	\$0.42m
GippsDairy	\$0.27m

Scorecard

Sub-priority	Goal	Baseline August 2025	Result	2030 Target
1.1 Uplifting farm business performance	Increase in farmers knowing their cash, profit and wealth	70%	72%	75%
1.2 Enhancing farm operations	Increase in farmers making better decisions as a result of Dairy Australia extension services	73%	65%*	80%
1.3 Creating pathways for people	Increase in farmers actively retaining and developing employees	82%	77%	90%

*Denotes statistically significant shift

Sub-priority 1.1

Uplifting farm business performance



Outcome

Dairy farm businesses perform better on cashflow, profit and wealth and will be more adaptable and profitable.

Key achievements

- Enabled farmers and advisers to benchmark business performance and productivity through DairyBase, which now supports more than 3,200 registered users and contains over 19,610 farm datasets.
- Provided regionally relevant insights into farm business performance through the Dairy Farm Monitor Project (DFMP), with more than 235 farm datasets collected and analysed across all eight dairy regions in 2025–26. An independent evaluation completed in November 2025 demonstrated the value of the program, with a benefit–cost ratio of 8:1.
- Strengthened the evidence base for farm carbon measurement and reporting, with more than 6,140 carbon calculator datasets captured through DairyBase and Farm Business Snapshot, supporting farmers to better understand emissions performance and respond to emerging market and regulatory requirements.
- Supported farmers to make more informed financial decisions and strengthen business analysis capability through a refresh of the Dairy Farm Business Analysis course. Phase 1 improved the course design and updated farm case–studies with a focus on cash, profit and wealth.
- Strengthened capability to support farm financial decision making through completion of the Cash, Costs and Margins workshop pilot. National rollout will commence in 2026–27.
- Advanced understanding of the factors linked to long–term farm profitability by kicking off development of new insights drawing on longitudinal DFMP and Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme (QDAS) data.
- Enabled 168 farmers to make more comprehensive decisions about the future of their business through first–time participation in Our Farm Our Plan (OFOP). This takes the total number of farmers participating in OFOP to 1,640.
- Expanded business support for farmers through continued collaboration with DairyNZ, including piloting Our Farm, Our Business, which builds on Our Farm, Our Plan and equips farmers to track performance, measure progress and strengthen business decision–making over time.





Sub-priority 1.2

Enhancing farm operations

Outcome

Dairy farmers are equipped to make on-farm improvements that impact profitability, productivity and sustainability.

Key achievements

- Supported farmers to sustainably improve productivity and profitability through delivery of more than 400 extension activities to over 4,000 participants, covering over 30 extension programs.
- The average self-rated knowledge of extension program participants increased from 5.6 to 8.4 (out of 10) across all programs delivered. The extension programs that had the greatest increase in knowledge were Transition Cow Management, Down Cows, and Second-in-Charge (2IC).
- The self-rated overall value to their business was rated as 9.1 out of 10 across all extension programs, with Feeding Pastures for Profit averaging 10 out of 10, and Cool Cows averaging 9.7 out of 10.
- A majority of extension program participants planned to make a change as a result of attending, with two-thirds to occur immediately, and one-third within six months.
- Key extension program successes:
 - Understanding Farm Carbon reached a total of 1,150 participants in two years and will be offered again in 2026-27.
 - Over 475 people completed Milking & Mastitis Management across 45 deliveries nationally.
 - Rearing Healthy Calves Fundamentals and Rearing Healthy Calves in Practice attracted over 300 and 140 participants, respectively, across 26 and 14 deliveries.
 - Healthy Hooves attracted over 200 participants across 18 deliveries.
 - Euthanasia Livestock completions doubled from the previous year, with over 150 completions in 2025-26 across 20 deliveries.
 - Recommended delivery of Genomics at a Glance and Genomics in Practice to support the industry goal of increasing herd productivity through genetic gain.
- Regional teams supported Young Dairy Network and Dairy Discussion Groups, offering around 200 extension activities tailored to regional needs through peer-to-peer learning and social connection, attracting more than 4,000 participants.
- The national Nollaig Heffernan Roadshow again attracted strong interest, with 280 participants across 24 sessions, covering a range of people-related topics, including succession planning and managing staff. Over half of participants planned to make a change immediately, from improving communication with staff, to prioritising and allocating tasks, and managing stress and emotions. Follow-up conversations with participants have since shown benefits from the changes made.
- New extension programs delivered:
 - Pasture Fundamentals, with more than 80 farmers participating across three regions.
 - Irrigation Management, with more than 50 farmers participating across four regions.
 - Disbudding Best Practice, which was completed by over 127 participants across 12 deliveries, supporting improved animal welfare outcomes in Queensland and New South Wales.
- Introduced the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework, to build stronger relationships with farmers through engagement beyond program delivery and a deeper understanding of their experiences, challenges and decision-making.
- Continued to engage with farmers to deepen our understanding of their priorities, challenges and opportunities, which helps us to tailor extension development and delivery. Since the introduction of the Farm Engagement team, 73% of dairy farmers have engaged with us, with 962 areas of focus identified by farmers in 2025-26.

Sub-priority 1.3

Creating pathways for people



Outcome

Dairy farmers are employing, managing and building skilled teams, while creating career pathways in a valued and rewarding industry.

Key achievements

- Enabled clearer expectations around roles, capabilities and behaviours, engagement and development for people working on farms by piloting the Dairy Capability Guide across 15 farm businesses of varying sizes and systems across six regions. Excellent results and feedback received from all participants.
- Built leadership capability on-farm by delivering the Second-in-Charge (2IC) program to 130 participants across Western Victoria, Gippsland, Murray, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia. Over 90% of participants reported high satisfaction.
- Enhanced farm safety and wellbeing by collaborating with WorkSafe in the development of Tractor Runover Guidance resources.
- Participated in fatigue on farm research with the Rural Safety and Health Alliance.
- Supported research and development of resources for employers of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) employees, through projects funded by the Gardiner Foundation to promote longevity of CaLD employees in the dairy industry.
- Assisted with over 280 farmer enquiries relating to industrial relations and human resources.



Fuel and fertiliser disruption

Supporting farmers through uncertainty

Objective

Provide farmers and the broader industry with timely, credible information and support regarding supply chain issues, to strengthen understanding of the changing situation, manage immediate risks and make informed decisions for their businesses.

Background

Escalating conflict in the Middle East and disruption to global supply chains created significant uncertainty around the availability and cost of fuel and fertiliser in Australia. For dairy farmers, the potential impacts were particularly acute, with diesel critical to irrigation, feed production, transport and milk collection, and nitrogen fertiliser central to pasture and feed production.

Action

To support farmers and ensure the industry was as prepared as possible, Dairy Australia activated its Issues Management Framework, brought together expertise from across the organisation and worked closely with Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF), government and other industry partners.

The response included:

- four national webinars attracting over 1,000 registrations
- a dedicated Fuel and Fertiliser Disruption online hub providing farmers with current information, webinar recordings, practical resources and decision-making tools
- 25 regional sessions, providing locally relevant advice on fertiliser alternatives, cost comparisons, feed and nutrition, profitability and financial planning, which were attended by 183 industry participants.

Regular industry intelligence gathering and economic modelling also supported peak industry body advocacy efforts and decision-making.

Impact

The response gave farmers access to timely, independent advice to support informed decision-making during a period of significant uncertainty.

More than 1,000 webinar registrations demonstrated strong national demand for information, while regional sessions provided locally relevant advice and valuable intelligence on farmer sentiment. With impacts varied across regions, Dairy Australia calibrated its response to actual farmer need.

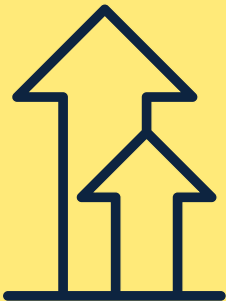
Insights gathered through the response also informed industry advocacy and government engagement, including efforts to recognise dairy as a priority fuel user. The actions taken strengthened relationships across the Research and Development Corporation (RDC) network, with several RDCs drawing on Dairy Australia's response model to support their own industries.



Innovating for future success

Sub-priorities

- 2.1 Building feedbase productivity
- 2.2 Building herd productivity
- 2.3 Adapting to a changing operating environment



Purpose

Driving research and innovation that delivers productivity benefits via incremental gains and disruptive technology.

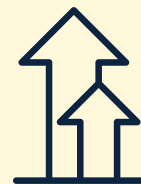
Investment: \$20.2 million

External investment \$3.87m	
Major funding partners	2025-26 contribution
Table includes selected funding partners and does not represent all external investment contributions.	
Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation Ltd	\$2.88m
Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources	\$0.39m
Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	\$0.14m

Scorecard

Sub-priority	Goal	Baseline August 2025	Result	2030 Target
2.1 Building feedbase productivity	Increase in farms achieving five years or more of production from perennial pastures before resowing	50%*	53%	60%
2.2 Building herd productivity	Increase in farms whose heifers are meeting 85% of mature cow production	27%	32%	50%
2.3 Adapting to a changing operating environment	Increase in farmers productively reducing emissions intensity	59%	51%**	75%

* Baseline and 2025-26 result from Feed and Animal Nutrition Survey
** Denotes statistically significant shift



Sub-priority 2.1

Building feedbase productivity

Outcome

Sustainable production of forages with high nutritive value for grazing or conservation from high functioning soils.

Key achievements

- Supported more productive and profitable feedbase systems through the C4Milk project in Gatton, Queensland, which demonstrated the impact of varying summer and winter forage crop rotation strategies (with and without manure applied) on yield and quality over a two-year period. This project is being extended to continue monitoring longer term effects of crop rotation strategies and has also been replicated in Northern Victoria over the last two years.
- Demonstrated practical options to reduce reliance on synthetic nitrogen fertiliser while maintaining production through the inclusion of white clover in irrigated pastures. DairyHIGH 2 research in Tasmania showed similar pasture and milk solids production per hectare when annual nitrogen fertiliser was reduced from 300 kilograms per hectare to 150 kilograms per hectare.
- Strengthened access to independent forage variety information by updating the Forage Value Index (FVI). Two newly released perennial ryegrass varieties were listed in the top three overall for predicted dry matter production, an indicator of the advancements in genetic gain being achieved by the industry in recent years.
- Launched several new investments in Feedbase Research and development that are closely aligned with both the National Dairy Forages Research and Development Strategy and Dairy Australia's Feedbase productivity goal to increase home grown feed utilisation by one tonne per hectare on average by 2030.
- Provided practical insights for kikuyu-based systems through the DairyUP research program in NSW, identifying grazing thresholds to support improved grazing management and milk production efficiency, and showing fibre digestibility is a stronger indicator of quality decline than fibre content alone. The work also establishes a strong foundation for future integration of nutritive value predictions with remote sensing technologies, pasture monitoring systems, and digital agriculture platforms.
- Improved the relevance of feedbase extension programs by investing in updates to Feeding Pastures for Profit and Top Fodder, with new extension in forage crop management and soil and agronomy fundamentals being developed for piloting in 2026-27.



Sub-priority 2.2

Building herd productivity

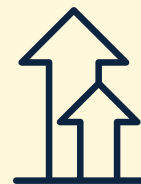
Outcome

Cow longevity and herd productivity is optimised.

Key achievements

- Supported increased cow survival and lifetime productivity through DairyUP research that identified factors associated with cows remaining in the herd, including links between omega-3 blood lipid profiles and lower culling risk in older cows. The research also generated insights into early-life feeding and growth, heifer management, heat tolerance and milk composition to inform breeding, feeding, health and culling decisions.
- Strengthened breeding tools to support more productive, fertile and efficient herds through DairyBio Animals 2021-26, delivering new and improved breeding values for traits including survival, stillbirth, fertility, transition cow health, heat tolerance, sustainability and feed efficiency. Also delivered decision-support tools to manage inbreeding and recessive defects. DairyBio is a joint initiative of Dairy Australia, Agriculture Victoria and the Gardiner Foundation.
- Enabled more farmers to make informed breeding and herd management decisions through DataGene's 2026 Australian Breeding Values (ABV) release, while exceeding annual adoption targets for genomic testing with 62,609 tests completed. DataGene's HerdData app recorded 231 users.
- Identified opportunities to improve reproductive performance through the ReproRefresh project, combining analysis of 1,202 herds with input from farmers and service providers to guide future investment and support for data use, heat detection and artificial insemination technician performance.
- Identified opportunities to improve herd productivity through the 2025 Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey, which highlighted practical opportunities to increase weighing of replacement heifers, strengthen heat stress management in higher-risk regions, and support more proactive milk quality management, particularly for bulk milk cell count and mastitis.





Sub-priority 2.3

Adapting to a changing operating environment

Outcome

Profitable dairy businesses that are based on optimal production systems while mitigating impact on climate and environment.

Key achievements

- Enabled farmers to better understand their farm carbon footprint and prepare for changing market and regulatory expectations through Understanding Farm Carbon workshops. More than 700 farmers and service providers participated with 159 farmers also completing one-to-one consultations to calculate their farm carbon number.
- Supported consistency in farm carbon reporting by engaging with the federal government on aligning the requirements for a centralised agriculture carbon calculator engine with the existing dairy industry standard of Australian Dairy Carbon Calculator.
- Supported farmers to profitably reduce emissions and strengthen business resilience by developing and piloting targeted services, while identifying opportunities to integrate climate risk management into existing Dairy Australia services.
- Strengthened access to effluent system design expertise by delivering the Design of Livestock Effluent Systems course, supporting effective effluent management and compliance on dairy farms.
- Enabled farmers to make informed decisions about farm system changes by delivering workshops on using the Farm Systems Evaluator tool.
- Equipped dairy farmers with tools, resources and insights to make informed decisions about feedpads and contained housing infrastructure through the Raising the Roof event which attracted 300 attendees over three days and received very positive feedback.
- Improved industry preparedness for a potential H5 avian influenza outbreak through successful milk disinfection testing undertaken in partnership with CSIRO, providing additional response options for the dairy industry.
- Improved access to practical effluent management guidance by updating resources and collaborating with Agriculture Victoria to revise the Victorian Effluent Guidelines.



DairyHIGH 2

Reducing nitrogen fertiliser while maintaining dairy farm productivity

Research objective

Investigate strategies to reduce reliance on synthetic nitrogen fertiliser (including the use of legumes and diverse pasture mixes) while maintaining pasture growth, milk production and farm profitability.

What did we investigate?

- Potential nitrogen fertiliser savings while maintaining pasture production in an intensive irrigated grazing system.
- Required changes to pasture composition to support productive dairy systems with lower nitrogen inputs.

Project outline

Researchers established four irrigated farmlet systems (mini farms) at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Dairy Research Facility in Elliott, north-west Tasmania. The farmlets were managed over three consecutive lactation seasons (2023–26) to test research theories under real farm conditions.

Each farmlet differed in the amount of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser applied and the types of pasture species grown:

Farmlet 1 (F1)	80% perennial ryegrass and 20% white clover with 300 kilograms of synthetic nitrogen per hectare.
Farmlet 2 (F2)	80% perennial ryegrass and 20% white clover with 150 kilograms of synthetic nitrogen per hectare.
Farmlet 3 (F3)	40% perennial ryegrass, 30% white clover and 30% plantain with 150 kilograms of synthetic nitrogen per hectare.
Farmlet 4 (F4):	40% mixed grasses, 30% mixed legumes, 30% mixed herbs, with no nitrogen application.



Practical outcomes

Research findings from the project:

- In the first year, all farmlets produced around 21 tonnes of dry matter per hectare, double the industry average in Tasmania.
- White clover naturally contributed substantial amounts of nitrogen across all farmlets, supplying more than 250 kilograms of biologically fixed nitrogen per hectare during the first year of the study.
- In the second year, the farmlet receiving half the amount of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser (F2) produced almost the same amount of pasture as the farmlet receiving the conventional amount of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser (F1).
- The herb components of the F3 and F4 pastures declined heavily in the first year and contributed negligible amounts to the overall pasture composition in years two and three.
- Over the three-year study, similar milk solids production per hectare was achieved on F1, F2 and F3 (over 2000kg of milk solids per hectare per annum). F4 also exceeded industry average milk production per hectare, despite carrying fewer cows than F1, F2 and F3.
- Importantly, this higher productivity was achieved while reducing total nitrogen inputs, with F2 and F3 applying synthetic nitrogen fertiliser rates at approximately 25% below industry averages.

Industry impact

The results demonstrate that irrigated grazing dairy farms in temperate regions of Australia can maintain high pasture and milk production while using substantially less nitrogen fertiliser than is typically applied. This helps to support productive and profitable farming systems.

A key reason for success was the strong and consistent contribution of white clover, which supplied large amounts of biologically fixed nitrogen to the pasture system.

Dairy farmer Rory Wellwood from Smithton, Tasmania was a participant in the research project.

“

The level of knowledge and passion within our industry was very evident and it was good to see it being used to coordinate this project. To me, the project was a reminder that getting the basics right ensures good pasture quality and production, and with good irrigation and good cows we can convert grass into more milk solids. We will try to replicate the clover-based swards where we can in our system.

”

—

Dairy farmer Rory Wellwood from Smithton, Tasmania

Acknowledgements

The work was funded by Dairy Australia, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and the University of Tasmania.

ReproRefresh

Better fertility for
more productive,
longer-lasting cows



Research objective

Improve understanding of current reproductive performance in Australian dairy herds and identify the highest-impact opportunities for improvement.

What did we investigate?

- Reproductive performance: across seasonal, split and year-round calving herds, including submission and in-calf rates, heat detection, artificial insemination performance, semen choices, heifer growth, cow health, heat stress and the use of daughter fertility Australian Breeding Values.
- Reproductive management decisions: the reproductive management practices farmers value, barriers to adoption, trusted sources of advice and preferred approaches to learning and support.

Project outline

Reproductive records were compiled from several sources, including DataGene, DairyUP, herd advisers, farmers and a prospective heifer cohort study.

Following extensive data preparation, almost one million lactations from 663 herds and 3,594 herd mating groups were included in the analysis.

Five focus groups were also held across multiple dairy regions and farming systems between October and December 2025. These involved 25 farmers, farm managers and staff, and 17 veterinarians, consultants and reproductive advisers. Discussions explored farmer attitudes and behaviours, barriers and enablers to improved performance, and the support needed to achieve change on farm.

Practical outcomes

The project identified considerable variation in reproductive performance between herds, indicating substantial scope for improvement across all calving systems.

The findings highlighted several practical opportunities to improve reproductive performance by:

- strengthening heat detection and improving the timing of insemination
- building staff capability in semen handling and artificial insemination technique
- monitoring heifer growth and providing additional support to late-born or underweight animals
- managing the increasing reproductive risks associated with heat stress
- making informed use of sexed and beef semen
- increasing selection for daughter fertility
- improving reproductive data collection, reporting and benchmarking.

The consultation reinforced that farmers are most likely to adopt practices that are simple, fit existing farm systems and deliver clear benefits. They prefer practical, farm-specific advice from trusted advisers, rather than more data or one-size-fits-all recommendations.

Industry impact

ReproRefresh has established a strong evidence base for improving reproductive performance in Australian dairy herds.

The findings will help focus industry investment on the areas most likely to improve fertility, productivity and workforce efficiency, while recognising the differing needs of seasonal, split and year-round calving systems.

By combining practical training, improved data analysis and decision support, regionally tailored advice, peer learning and providing advanced pathways for experienced farmers, the project will help dairy farmers adopt reproductive practices that deliver the greatest value for their farm business.

Acknowledgements

Dairy Australia acknowledges Dr John Morton of Jemora Pty Ltd for leading the reproductive data analysis, and DataGene, DairyUP, participating advisers, veterinarians, service providers and dairy farmers who contributed data, expertise and insights.

Ensuring a sustainable industry

Sub-priorities

- 3.1 Advancing industry sustainability
- 3.2 Remaining locally and globally competitive
- 3.3 Driving community trust and support



Purpose

Working with farmers and the wider dairy industry to advance sustainability, strengthen global and domestic competitiveness and drive community trust and support.

Investment: \$10.4 million

External investment: \$0.84m	
Major funding partners	2025-26 contribution
Table includes selected funding partners and does not represent all external investment contributions.	
Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	\$0.23m
Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (including National Foundation for Australia-China Relations)	\$0.18m
Victorian Government Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (Global Victoria)	\$0.14m

Scorecard

Sub-priority	Goal	Baseline August 2025	Result	2030 Target
3.1 Advancing industry sustainability	Increase in dairy farmers improving performance against the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework targets	82%	85%	85%
3.2 Remaining locally and globally competitive	Increase in Australia as a trusted source of high quality and sustainable dairy products	86%*	79%	90%
3.3 Driving community trust and support	Increase in community trust in the Australian dairy industry	73%**	79%	80%

* Baseline result was for Thailand only; 2025-26 result is representative of all markets.
** Baseline was set based on rolling five-year average



Sub-priority 3.1

Advancing industry sustainability

Outcome

The Australian dairy industry is seen as credible and transparent, underpinned by farmers' strong sustainable, profitable practices and commitment to ongoing improvement.

Key achievements

- Promoted the Australian dairy industry's sustainability practices by publishing the 2025 Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework (ADSF) Scorecard and the updated Animal Care Commitments, including a new Animal Biosecurity goal.
- Supported industry policy development by delivering 39 policy submissions with peak dairy bodies on key issues.
- Supported progress on animal welfare commitments under the ADSF by launching the CalfWays website and commissioning three regional fit-for-purpose projects.
- Supported dairy farmers and industry to navigate critical issues and events by:
 - developing the Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness industry action guide
 - activating the response to the H5 avian influenza incursion under the Issues Management Framework
 - coordinating industry response to national fuel and fertiliser supply chain issues.
- Supported waste reduction efforts by working with stakeholders to develop a sustainable model for council-run silage plastic recycling services in Gippsland.
- Strengthened the capability of dairy manufacturers to adopt emerging technologies and sustainability practices by delivering the Dairy Manufacturing Webinar Series, now in its 15th year, with funding secured from the Dairy Industry Association of Australia, Gardiner Foundation and participating dairy manufacturers.
- Promoted a more sustainable and competitive industry through support of the Dairy Manufacturers Sustainability Council, with funding secured from the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) to continue industry-wide collaboration on key sustainability priorities.





Sub-priority 3.2

Remaining locally and globally competitive

Outcome

The Australian dairy industry leverages its strengths to compete domestically and internationally.

Key achievements

- Secured funding from the Victorian Government through Global Victoria to deliver the Growing Demand for Victorian Dairy Exports Program, strengthening industry capability and supporting future export growth through enhancements to Dairy Australia's Scholarship Program. This fosters meaningful connections between Australia's dairy industry and international partners.
- Raised the profile of Australian dairy in two key export markets (South Korea and Malaysia) by delivering the Taste the Wonders of Australia in-market events. The events were in partnership with Meat and Livestock Australia, Wine Australia, Hort Innovation, and Seafood Industry Australia (the Australian Food and Wine Collaboration Group).
- Enhanced the reputation of the Australian dairy industry in China, our largest export market, by successfully delivering the first phase of sustainability-focused market development activities. This work was funded by the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.
- Strengthened opportunities for Australian dairy in key South-East Asian markets through the successful delivery of the Leveraging Australian Dairy Sustainability Credentials for South-East Asia (LASSEA) program, enhancing the industry's ability to showcase its sustainability credentials.
- Supported industry trade policy understanding by convening industry Trade Reference Group meetings on key trade issues such as the European Union free trade agreement.
- Provided insights to support farmer decision making on the economics of intensive dairy housed systems through the delivery of the Dairy Farm Systems Economic Analysis project, including a key webinar hosted by Professor Bill Malcolm attracting over 100 participants.





Sub-priority 3.3

Driving community trust and support

Outcome

The community has strong levels of trust and support for Australian dairy.

Key achievements

- Drove long-term community support for dairy by educating more than 11,000 students across 100 schools about dairy farming, nutrition and food production through the eight-week Picasso Cows program.
- Built understanding of Australia's dairy industry among children and families through virtual farm tours and participation in agricultural shows, regional events and community expos.
- Amplified authentic farmer voices through the Farmer Ambassador Program, with 120 ambassadors participating in 189 industry promotion activities and more than 300 local community outreach engagements.
- Showcased the quality and diversity of Australian dairy through the Australian Grand Dairy Awards and a public relations campaign that generated 90 media articles with a combined reach of more than 21 million people.
- Encouraged Australians to choose locally produced dairy through the Aussie Dairy Summer campaign, reaching 5.4 million people via media, influencer and experiential activity.
- Strengthened consumer understanding of dairy's health benefits (88%) by engaging health professionals through trade conferences, continuing education programs, university partnerships and evidence-based resources.
- Reinforced the nutritional benefits of Australian dairy through the Aussie Dairy, Simple Greatness campaign, reaching more than 2.3 million Australians aged 18-49 across Netflix, Spotify and broadcast video-on-demand.
- Built trust in the dairy industry among younger Australians through the Your Dairy Questions, Simply Answered campaign and evidence-based information on the You Ask, We Answer hub, with 83% of campaign recognisers reporting increased trust.
- Celebrated the women behind Australia's dairy industry through the World Milk Day campaign, generating 120 media stories reaching 2.6 million people.
- Raised awareness of the importance of dairy for bone health among women aged 40-55 through Healthy Bones Action Week, generating 254 media stories and reaching 10.7 million Australians.
- Strengthened scientific evidence underpinning dairy's health and nutrition credentials by publishing three peer-reviewed scientific papers on the food matrix, yoghurt matrix and milk matrix.
- Contributed scientific evidence to major nutrition policy reviews, including the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Health Star Rating reviews, supporting recognition of dairy's role in a healthy diet.

Your Dairy Questions, Simply Answered

Objective

Strengthen trust and confidence in Australian dairy among younger Australians through transparent, evidence-based information on nutrition, animal care and sustainability, while reinforcing dairy's role in a healthy, sustainable and locally produced food system.

Background

While overall community trust in the Australian dairy industry remains strong at 86%, younger Australians continue to question the health benefits of dairy, and the industry's environmental and animal welfare practices.

Dairy Australia identified this as an opportunity to engage directly with younger audiences to answer their questions with trusted science-based information and reinforce dairy's health benefits – building on the success of the Aussie Dairy, Simple Greatness campaign.

Action

Dairy Australia launched Your Dairy Questions, Simply Answered, a highly targeted national campaign designed to openly and honestly address genuine questions from Australians, with answers provided by Dairy Australia's subject matter experts.

The campaign was built on extensive research and messaging and adopted a dual approach. Social media advertising provided engaging bite-sized answers, while a direct link pushed the audience to explore the full answer on the You Ask, We Answer hub, where they could access expert-led answers supported by external references, research papers and farmer case studies.

Readily accessible and credible dairy information was effectively delivered by engaging audiences in the same spaces where they actively seek information (including TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and news websites), and where misinformation can also circulate.

Impact

The campaign delivered strong improvements in trust, confidence and engagement, with those who saw the campaign significantly more likely to trust the dairy industry than those who did not (91% compared with 79%). They also reported stronger perceptions of animal care, transparency and the industry's commitment to a sustainable future.

Overall community trust in dairy foods and trust in the dairy industry both reached 87%, the highest level recorded. Trust in the dairy industry among younger Australians aged 18–29 years who were questioning dairy increased 11% (June 2025 to June 2026), while agreement that dairy foods are an important part of a healthy, balanced diet increased by 17% over the same period.

By addressing questions openly and authentically, Dairy Australia's Your Dairy Questions, Simply Answered campaign demonstrated how transparent, evidence-based communication can strengthen trust, build confidence and reinforce dairy's place in Australian diets and communities.

CalfWays

Alpine Valley, North-east Victoria

Objective

Address the lack of transparent, commercially viable market pathways for non-replacement dairy calves in the Alpine Valleys region by strengthening connections between dairy producers and supply chain partners, enabling informed business decisions.

Action

Key project activities included:

- A kick-off session and 'producer supply chain workshop' to align expectations and identify opportunities across the supply chain.
- Collaboration between dairy producers, feedlots, processors, calf rearers and backgrounders to better understand market requirements and opportunities.
- Industry site visits to Teys Jindalee feedlot, CalfLink calf rearers and Greenham Tongala processing plant. These visits provided insights into calf rearing systems, processor expectations and supply chain requirements as well as allowing participants to observe feedlot operations and cattle performance firsthand.
- The collection of farm-level financial and production data to better understand the economics of non-replacement dairy calves.
- The presentation and discussion of preliminary findings to participating producers in May 2026.
- A project report covering supply chains, economics, market requirements, calf specifications and indicative pricing.
- An industry briefing to share project outcomes and key learnings with producers and supply chain partners across the region and beyond.

Impact

The project has laid the foundation for a more reliable, transparent and commercially sustainable beef-from-dairy pathway in the Alpine Valleys region, improving the industry's sustainability credentials.

Participating farmers gained a clearer understanding of potential market opportunities for non-replacement dairy calves and supply chain requirements.

Dairy farmer Stuart Crosthwaite from Kergunyah South, Victoria, was a participant in the research project.

“

The CalfWays project has enabled me and other farmers to better understand what the processing sector requires in terms of the product. We must select the right genetics from the start, treat the beef calves like a premium dairy animal, ensuring their first 200 days of life are consistent, well grown, healthy and meeting the expectations of buyers. With this better understanding, we can improve trust and opportunities for dairy farmers.

”

— Dairy farmer Stuart Crosthwaite from Kergunyah South, Victoria

The project also strengthened relationships between producers and key industry partners, improving communication and creating a stronger foundation for future commercial collaboration.

Economic analysis has also helped establish baseline pricing and improved understanding of the costs, returns and risks associated with different calf production and sale pathways, helping producers identify the most commercially viable market options.

Acknowledgment

Dairy Australia acknowledges Meat & Livestock Australia as a partner in CalfWays. Under a three-year co-investment agreement, both organisations are contributing equally to support collaboration between the dairy and red meat industries and progress viable market pathways for non-replacement dairy calves.

Strategic Enablers

Communications and Engagement

Key achievements

- Delivered regionally relevant communications featuring real-life farmer experiences to support the adoption of best practices.
- Improved the online experience for farmers by enhancing content discoverability through search and artificial intelligence tools, and by integrating People in Dairy with the farmer website.
- Increased awareness of dairy industry priorities, research and services through media coverage reaching a potential audience of 8.5 million people, with 83% of coverage rated positive or very positive.
- Maintained strong digital engagement across website, email and social media channels, with around 800,000 website page views, email open rates exceeding 40%, and more than 50,000 social media interactions during the year.

Data and Insights

Key achievements

- Secured additional production and sales data through collaboration with the Australian Dairy Products Federation Executive Committee, reducing data gaps and strengthening the quality of national dairy industry reporting.
- Improved the accuracy of industry estimates by introducing a more robust validation process using verified sales data, strengthening confidence in industry insights and reporting.
- Established a centralised spot price tool and consolidated historical records, creating a single source of truth for market analysis and reporting.
- Completed the discovery phase of the DairyBase modernisation project, supporting the transition to a scalable cloud-based platform.
- Established a national expression of interest process for service activities, improving service planning, reducing duplication and creating a more consistent experience for farmers.
- Developed a trade data tool that provides faster access to current market information, reducing response times and supporting more timely business and market decisions.

People and Expertise

Key achievements

- Enhanced employee experience through the launch of a refreshed Employee Value Proposition, strengthening talent attraction, employee engagement and connection to Daily Australia's culture, purpose and future.
- Improved organisational capability and effectiveness through leadership capability initiatives, the implementation and ongoing optimisation of a new Human Resources Information System, and enhanced employee benefits and people processes.

Strategic partnerships

Key achievements

- Refreshed the Dairy Australia Stakeholder Consultation Plan to align with the 2030 Strategic Plan. The consultation plan has been developed in line with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Best Practice Guide to Stakeholder Consultation, and provides a clear framework for how the organisation consults and engages with its stakeholders.
- Secured processor investment in partnership with ADPF to support four key projects that focus on profitability, productivity and sustainability.
- The industry group Dairy Moving Forward (DMF) continued to strengthen alignment across the industry's research, development and extension investments, identifying priorities to sustainably improve farm profitability and productivity. DMF facilitated finalisation of the National Dairy Forages Research and Development Strategy, and a comprehensive portfolio of investments was developed to bring this strategy to life. The DMF Steering Committee were hosted by Agriculture Science and Technology at their Ellinbank Smart Farm to immerse themselves in the research happening there.

Disclaimer

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