Progress Report

Independent Review of Performance 2021-25

Progress against Dairy Australia' commitments, January to June 2026

Introduction

This report outlines Dairy Australia's progress in the first half of 2026 on commitments made in response to the Independent Review of Performance 2021-25 (IROP).

Dairy Australia welcomed the 2021–25 independent performance review and accepted its findings in full. The review provided a clear and public assessment of performance, recognising areas of strength while identifying where greater focus and consistency are required. As an industry-owned, levy-funded organisation operating within a statutory framework, Dairy Australia is committed to transparency, accountability and responsiveness, and this report reflects that commitment.

This report, the first progress update since the Independent Review was finalised, outlines the actions taken to date in response to the review's recommendations and demonstrates how Dairy Australia is progressing against its commitments. It also reinforces the organisation's intent to monitor, measure and communicate progress regularly, with a strong emphasis on clarity, engagement and delivering meaningful value for farmers, industry and government.

Program timeline

In progress / Ongoing / Complete	2026	2026-27		2027-28		2028-29		2029-30	
Focus areas	H2 (Jan - Jun)	H1 (Jul – Dec)	H2 (Jan - Jun)	H1 (Jul – Dec)	H2 (Jan - Jun)	H1 (Jul – Dec)	H2 (Jan - Jun)	H1 (Jul – Dec)	H2 (Jan - Jun)
Strategic performance									
Leverage the new Strategic Plan 2030 to strengthen communications and clearly articulate the vision, purpose and scope of Dairy Australia.	In progress	In progress							
Ensure activities and annual investments align to the core priorities, goals and scorecard outlined in the new Strategic Plan.	In progress	In progress	In progress						
Engagement, consultation and communication									
Ensure communications on trade and policy outcomes are embedded within the broader farmer communications strategy.	In progress	In progress	In progress						
Review communications activities to improve the effectiveness of content and channels. Strengthen the role of communications and engagement to ensure consistent, relevant and clear communications is accessible across regions and functions.	In progress	In progress	In progress						
Strengthen the collaboration with Regional Development Programs (RDPs), their Council of Chairs and industry to identify overlap with Dairy Australia's regional resources and continue to support the RDP Executive Officers to identify and resolve operational and regional issues.	In progress	In progress	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Continuously optimise the digital experience for farmers to access resources on their preferred channels, including leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) search capabilities.	In progress	In progress	In progress						
Make stakeholder input and feedback loops central to all consultation through a refreshed Stakeholder Consultation Framework.	In progress								
Investment decisions									
Deliver on the Strategic Plan 2030 by maintaining a balanced investment portfolio that unlocks today's potential while driving innovation for future success.	In progress	In progress							
Ensure a more deliberate balance between higher-risk, longer-term investments and reliable, iterative research that also delivers short-term, practical outcomes for farmers.	In progress	In progress							
Review current research communications activities, evaluate effectiveness of content and channels, and develop targeted communications to improve awareness of the outcomes and on-farm applicability.	In progress	In progress	In progress						
Update the Strategic Investment Framework and Investment Review Panel processes and documentation to ensure market-failure checks are embedded in the governance framework and approval assessments.	In progress	In progress							
Cross-industry and cross-sector collaboration									
Work collaboratively with the Council of Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and directly with specific RDCs on further opportunities to address shared challenges.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Improve the visibility of collaborative work and its outcomes for farmers and other stakeholders, including flagship projects such as CalfWays – a joint initiative of Dairy Australia and Meat & Livestock Australia.	In progress	In progress	In progress						
Governance, compliance and government alignment									
Review current public reporting of both governance decisions and levy fund management, evaluate effectiveness and develop a plan to improve transparency and stakeholder confidence.	In progress	In progress	In progress	In progress					
Review Dairy Australia's current role as Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework (ADSF)secretariat and clarify its governance boundaries.	In progress	In progress							
Provide greater organisational clarity and direction within Dairy Australia by developing, communicating and embedding an operational and governance framework.	In progress	In progress							

Progress: January to June 2026

Focus area: Strategic performance

IROP Recommendation	Dairy Australia response	Estimated target delivery	Achievements to date
Clarify Dairy Australia's role and remit to stakeholders, ensuring transparency on responsibilities and boundaries across research, extension and policy support. Priority: Recommended.	• Leverage the new Strategic Plan 2030 to strengthen communications and clearly articulate the vision, purpose and scope of Dairy Australia.	• December 2026	• Strategic Plan 2030 launched and embedded across communications, providing a clearer articulation of Dairy Australia's vision, purpose and scope, with consistent messaging now reflected in external channels.
Reassess scope of activities to avoid duplication and maintain focus on core priorities. Priority: Recommended.	• Ensure activities and annual investments align to the core priorities, goals and scorecard outlined in the new Strategic Plan.	• June 2027	• Financial year 2026-27 (FY27) Annual Investment Plan (AIP) investments are clearly mapped to industry goals. • Playback document on FY27 industry consultation developed to ensure strategic priorities are addressed.

Focus area: Engagement, consultation and communication

IROP Recommendation	Dairy Australia response	Estimated target delivery	Achievements to date
Improve visibility of trade and policy outcomes for levy payers through targeted communication using levy payer–specific channels or forums for tailored updates. Priority: For consideration.	• Ensure communications on trade and policy outcomes are embedded within the broader farmer communications strategy.	• June 2027	• Trade and policy outcomes embedded in the 2026–27 farmer communications plan, ensuring consistent levy payer updates. • Targeted communications developed for priority trade issues (e.g. European Union ionophore changes, Free Trade Agreements), linking policy work to industry impact. • Dedicated communications capability established, strengthening translation of trade and policy outcomes for farmers.
Strengthen engagement and communication by focusing on quality over quantity with clear, accessible, results-oriented messaging that shows achievements and ongoing work. Priority: Recommended.	• Review communications activities to improve the effectiveness of content and channels. Strengthen the role of communications and engagement to ensure consistent, relevant and clear communications is accessible across regions and functions.	• June 2027	• Commenced an evaluation of the effectiveness of content and channels to increase targeted reach and engagement with farmers based on profiles and preferences. • Reviewing and implementing processes to efficiently deliver consistent, outcome-focused content with regional relevance.

Focus area: Engagement, consultation and communication (continued)

IROP Recommendation	Dairy Australia response	Estimated target delivery	Achievements to date
Improve clarity of Dairy Australia's role in regional engagement under the Regional Development Program (RDP) Evolution model. Priority: Recommended.	• Strengthen the collaboration with Regional Development Programs (RDPs), their Council of Chairs and industry to identify overlap with Dairy Australia's regional resources and continue to support the RDP Executive Officers to identify and resolve operational and regional issues.	• Working group interim report – December 2026; collaboration ongoing.	• RDP Council of Chairs has reviewed the RDP evolution model and completed a review of its effectiveness compared to its original intent. • Initiated a working group to co-design clearer, more practical agreement/s between Dairy Australia and RDPs, that improves alignment, supports effective levy investment in activities, and delivers better outcomes for farmers. • Terms of reference agreed and the working group will commence in July 2026.
Improve accessibility and usability of information resources (navigation, simpler language, concise summaries highlighting outcomes and levy value). Priority: For consideration.	• Continuously optimise the digital experience for farmers to access resources on their preferred channels, including leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) search capabilities.	• June 2027	• Implemented new content principles that deliver concise, clear and outcome-focused language, and to improve the authority, relevance and discoverability of information for AI driven search. These will continue to be rolled out and optimised. • Commenced planning for a farmer portal to provide personalised content and services based on profiles and preferences. • Integrated the People in Dairy website into the Dairy Australia farmer website to streamline access to workforce-related resources and benefit from future AI functionality.
Enhance transparency in consultation processes by communicating how stakeholder feedback informs decisions and plans. Priority: For consideration.	• Make stakeholder input and feedback loops central to all consultation through a refreshed Stakeholder Consultation Framework. • As an example, the industry's Water Reference Group formed around the issue of water recovery under the Murray Darling Basin Plan prompted Dairy Australia's investment in economic analysis regarding the impact of water buybacks.	• December 2026	• Consultation undertaken with approximately 400 dairy farmers during development of Strategic Plan 2030, with findings informing strategic priorities. • Strong stakeholder engagement on Annual Investment Plan 2026-27, including an in-person workshop. • Introduction of a quarterly Policy Submissions Summary email to provide stakeholders with visibility of Dairy Australia's technical input into industry policy submissions led by Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) and the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), including the issues addressed and outcomes where available.

Focus area: Investment decisions

IROP Recommendation	Dairy Australia response	Estimated target delivery	Achievements to date
Rebalance the investment portfolio to maintain mix of short-term, region-specific projects alongside long-term strategic research, whilst addressing stakeholder perceptions regarding visibility of short-term outcomes. Priority: Recommended.	• Deliver on the Strategic Plan 2030 by maintaining a balanced investment portfolio that unlocks today's potential while driving innovation for future success. • Ensure a more deliberate balance between higher-risk, longer-term investments and reliable, iterative research that also delivers short-term, practical outcomes for farmers.	• December 2026	• Completed a five-year Research and Innovation (R&I) portfolio analysis, providing a baseline view of investment allocations to inform future investment decisions. • Reclassified investment expenditure under a new Strategic Investment Framework, to improve visibility of investment allocation, strengthen alignment to strategic priorities and support more consistent investment decision-making.
Consider targeted communication strategies to better share updates on investment outcomes and their on-farm applicability. Priority: For consideration.	• Review current research communications activities, evaluate effectiveness of content and channels, and develop targeted communications to improve awareness of the outcomes and on-farm applicability.	• June 2027	• Commenced the review and optimisation of content and channels to enable targeted communications based on farmer profiles and preferences.
Continue refining economic evaluation frameworks and add market-failure checks for new research proposal. Priority: For consideration.	• Update the Strategic Investment Framework and Investment Review Panel processes and documentation to ensure market-failure checks are embedded in the governance framework and approval assessments.	• December 2026	• Identified key areas of the Monitoring & Evaluation framework to be updated.

Focus area: Cross-industry and cross-sector collaboration

IROP Recommendation	Dairy Australia response	Estimated target delivery	Achievements to date
Expand collaboration with other Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and industry bodies to address shared challenges, particularly climate adaptation, environmental sustainability and productivity improvements. Priority: Recommended.	• Work collaboratively with the Council of Research and Development Corporations CRRDC and directly with specific RDCs on further opportunities to address shared challenges.	• Ongoing	• Ongoing discussion with Meat & Livestock Australia on joint Australian Carbon Credit Unit development work. • Planning for the next delivery of Joint RDC in-market events to support shared market development objectives and strengthen Australia's international industry relationships. • Work with Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) and CRRDC on a Productivity Mission. • Continued work with CRRDC on a National Food and Fibre Education Strategy which was launched in November 2025. • Nearing completion on the following CRRDC projects: – Analysis of regional workforce attraction and retention factors. – Unlocking Private Investment in Australian Agriculture and Innovation. – Return on Investment Methodology Review and Enhancing Data Sharing Across the RDC System. – Building an evidence base for ongoing access to farm protectants. – Continuing work on the CRRDC Project: Ag Safety Data Net.
Improve visibility of collaborative work and outcomes to levy payers and stakeholders. Priority: Opportunity.	• Improve the visibility of collaborative work and its outcomes for farmers and other stakeholders, including flagship projects such as CalfWays – a joint initiative of Dairy Australia and Meat & Livestock Australia.	• June 2027	• CalfWays joint initiative with Meat & Livestock Australia successfully launched, including the establishment of a dedicated online presence and the development of a broad range of supporting materials including case studies, videos and an e-newsletter. • Provided communications support to the development of the CRRDC communications strategy, highlighting collaboration with other RDCs. • Examples of cross-RDC collaboration are being actively shared with farmers through promotion of the Rural RDC 'Collective Research and Innovation Outcomes Report 2025' including Anaerobic Co-Digestion Project, Cross-RDC AI Alliance, CalfWays, Australian Pastures Genebank and Australian Food and Wine Collaboration Group.

Focus area: Governance, compliance and government alignment

IROP Recommendation	Dairy Australia response	Estimated target delivery	Achievements to date
Increase transparency of governance decisions and levy fund management through regular public reporting; ensuring independence in advisory committee appointments. Priority: Recommended.	• Review current public reporting of both governance decisions and levy fund management, evaluate effectiveness and develop a plan to improve transparency and stakeholder confidence.	• December 2027	• Annual Investment Plan (AIP) FY27 Playback report will be published in mid-2026, to close the loop on AIP consultation process. • Decision has been made to publish half-yearly progress reports against strategic plan and annual investment plan. The first of these reports will be available in September 2026. • Independent Chair of the Board Selection Committee appointed in consultation with ADF & ADPF in April 2026. • Execution of an ongoing stakeholder communications program that regularly reports on levy-funded investments, outcomes and impacts, including initiatives such as Quarterly Policy Submission Summaries, Annual Investment Plan updates and strategic plan progress reporting.
Clarify governance arrangements for the ADSF, including defining boundaries of Dairy Australia's secretariat role, and improve communication of decision-making processes. Priority: For consideration.	Describe • Dairy Australia's role as secretariat for ADSF. • The ADSF communication decision-making process.	• ADIC approval for new Terms of Reference for the ADSF Steering Committee by end 2026	• Updated Terms of Reference for the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework Steering Committee have been developed following the 2024 governance review, with Dairy Australia's role as secretariat clearly defined.
Streamline internal processes and empower decision-making at appropriate levels to reduce inefficiencies. Priority: For consideration.	• Provide greater organisational clarity and direction within Dairy Australia by developing, communicating and embedding an operational and governance framework.	• December 2026	• Review of portfolio planning and delivery effectiveness using industry recognised benchmarking tools. • Identified and prioritised key areas for improvement.

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