

Annual Investment Plan

At a glance

2026-27



Overview

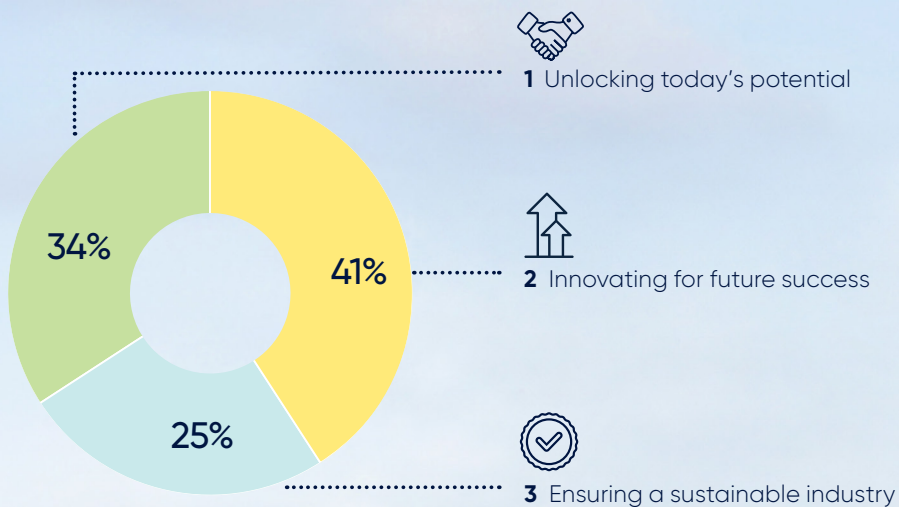
Budget

Dairy Australia's total budget in 2026–27 is \$66.6 million.

We are prioritising investment towards achieving our strategic industry goals and scorecard, with

- \$52.6 million allocated to three strategic priorities.
- \$7 million supporting strategic enablers that underpin delivery.
- \$7 million to operating and administration costs and general business support expenses of running the organisation.

Breakdown of investment across the three strategic priorities (\$52.6 million)



Industry goals

Working closely with industry, Dairy Australia has identified an overarching goal to ensure that dairy farms achieve competitive returns on total assets (ROTA) of five to six per cent¹, supported by four goals that describe the outcomes we're aiming to achieve for Australian dairy farmers. To progress these goals in 2026-27, key investments and outcomes are outlined below.

Goal	Key investments and outcomes	
 Increase profitability Increase earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) by 30 cents per kilogram of milk solids	• Improve data-driven benchmarking and insights by expanding Dairy Farm Monitor Project (DFMP) sample size. • Improve understanding of the key features associated with top performing, consistently profitable farms through detailed analysis of longitudinal DFMP data and development of case studies. • Support farmers in achieving their farm business goals by delivering programs related to cash, profit and wealth.	
 Increase feed productivity Increase homegrown feed utilisation by one tonne per milking hectare	• Improve the amount of fodder grown, used and conserved through 12 new forage research projects. • Improve the effectiveness of extension delivery by refreshing Top Fodder and Feeding Pastures for Profit. • Enable better ryegrass cultivar selection by continuing to enhance the Forage Value Index. • Maximise the benefits of virtual fencing technologies by supporting the decision-making process for farmers.	
 Increase herd productivity Increase genetic gain by \$90 per cow entering the herd	• Continue to improve genetic gains by supporting increased use of the Balanced Performance Index and initiating the new Australian Breeding Values Predictive Powers research project. • Strengthen genetic gain and breeding decision-making through investment in DataGene, including upgrades to data platforms, development of genomic mating tools and an approach to extension, progression of single-step genetic evaluation, and enhancement of reference population data.	
 While remaining focused on sustainable practices Increase the number of heifers reaching third lactation and beyond by 12%	• Improve heifer health and longevity through research to control mastitis and pinkeye. • Strengthen heifer growth, fertility and lifetime productivity by updating practical tools and resources across nutrition, mastitis, heifer management and reproduction programs, including InCalf, Countdown and Better Heifers.	

¹ Excludes capital growth

Key investments

Unlocking today's potential



1.1 Uplifting farm business performance



- Strengthen benchmarking insights to support better farm business decisions by expanding the Dairy Farm Monitor Project and DairyBase dataset, including broader Victorian representation.
- Build stronger farm business performance by supporting planning and improving understanding of cash, profit and wealth drivers.

1.2 Enhancing farm operations



- Deliver tailored extension activities and resources which support farm businesses, through new programs including Cash, Costs & Margins, Pasture Fundamentals, Disbudding Best Practice, and Irrigation Management.
- Empower dairy farmers to make more informed decisions by reviewing how we make extension programs, tools, and resources available to service providers to use with their clients.

1.3 Creating pathways for people



- Support farmers to build the skills and capability of farming teams through clearer career pathways and progression of the Dairy Capability Guide.
- Make it easier for farmers to attract, onboard and retain people through practical people management, workforce, safety and career resources.

Innovating for future success



2.1 Building feedbase productivity



- Get more value from home-grown feed through continued investment in lifting pasture and forage performance and improving utilisation.
- Build more resilient feed systems with practical options to manage climate variability, pests and input pressures.
- Develop agronomic resources and tools to inform best practice in the production of high-quality forage crops across all regions.

2.2 Building herd productivity



- Improve herd performance and longevity through continued investment in genetics, nutrition and animal health research, and redevelopment of extension material across nutrition, heifer management and reproduction.
- Reduce the impact of priority animal health issues, including mastitis and pinkeye, by strengthening prevention, diagnostics and management approaches, and redeveloping mastitis extension material.

2.3 Adapting to a changing operating environment



- Make it easier to manage emissions, effluent and odour on farm, through clearer guidance and systems that support confident day-to-day decisions.
- Progress practical options to reduce emissions intensity while maintaining or lifting productivity and profitability, including expanded focus on data-driven case studies.

Ensuring a sustainable industry



3.1 Advancing industry sustainability



- Continue to support industry, including Australian Dairy Farmers and Australian Dairy Products Federation, via data-driven technical policy support.
- Progress industry-led sustainability initiatives such as the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework, CalfWays and the Dairy Animal Care Assurance Program.
- Support dairy farmers and industry through proactive issues management, including preparedness for and potential response to H5 avian influenza, and monitoring evolving risks that may impact farm operations and critical input supply chains, including fuel and fertiliser.

3.2 Remaining locally and globally competitive



- Strengthen Australia's position as a trusted supplier of high-quality dairy by building preference for Australia as a trusted source of high-quality and sustainable dairy products in international markets.
- Conduct economic research to better understand domestic sources of comparative advantage and critical success factors.
- Support the industry's competitive position through timely market insights, trade analysis and engagement that improves access and reduces barriers in key markets.

3.3 Driving community trust and support



- Strengthen community trust and support for Australian dairy, encouraging preference for Australian dairy products and contributing to a positive operating environment for farmers.
- Build confidence in dairy's health and nutrition benefits among health professionals, educators and future consumers, supporting informed choices and long-term demand for Australian dairy.

Extension priorities and key partnerships

Gippsland

Extension priorities

Build capability across dairy people
Deliver extension events, learning opportunities and farmer-led activities that respond to local needs.

Strengthen farm business resilience
Increase farm business planning, risk management and recovery from unexpected events.

Collaborate to amplify impact
Build strategic relationships and support delivery of actions in the Gippsland Dairy Industry Strategic Plan.

Key partnerships

GippsDairy: Shared planning and delivery.

Q Fever: Partner with WorkSafe Victoria to test and vaccinate 1,000 dairy farmers and farm workers across Victoria.

Facial eczema: Review international prevention practices.

CALD workforce support: In partnership with Gardiner Foundation.

Next Gen Retreat: Introduce young people to dairy careers and opportunities.

Gippsland Dairy Industry Leadership Group.

Murray

Extension priorities

Improve profitability through feedbase
Strong focus on feedbase productivity and nutrition, such as Advanced Nutrition in Action workshops.

Plan for access to water
Strengthening decision-making around irrigation, feed and system choices. Prepare for potentially prolonged price increases and possible shortages of fertiliser.

Improve heifer performance
Support improvements in animal nutrition and increased weighing of heifers, including practical strategies to improve heifer fertility and health.

Key partnerships

Murray Dairy: Shared planning, delivery and evaluation.

Young Dairy Network: In partnership with Murray Dairy and Gardiner Foundation.

C4Milk: Murray Dairy, Gardiner Foundation, Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI).

WomenCan: Farm placements for women in the Shepparton region.

Northern Dairy Industry Leadership Group.

Subtropical

Extension priorities

Improve herd health and productivity
Deliver mastitis, lameness, transition cow and heat stress programs suited to subtropical conditions.

Build a resilient feedbase
Support C4 Milk extension, FertSmart, irrigation, Pasture Fundamentals and TopFodder delivery.

Evaluate changing calving patterns
Adapt farm business programs to assess the financial impacts of changing milk flows..

Key partnerships

C4Milk: QDPI collaboration investigating fodder crops, feeding systems and profitability.

Queensland Department of Primary Industries: Technical support and extension tailored to subtropical dairy systems.

NSW Department of Primary Industries and North Coast Local Land Services: Regional extension and farmer capability development.

Tasmania

Extension priorities

Build people management capability
Build employee, leadership, safety and wellbeing capability across large and complex farms.

Increase homegrown feed productivity
Improve grazing, forage planning, soil management and system decisions for Tasmanian conditions.

Strengthen farm business management
Improve costs, margins, planning, decision-making, data use and benchmarking.

Key partnerships

DairyTas: Shared planning, delivery and evaluation.

Hire, Develop, Reward, Keep: Workforce capability program in partnership with DairyTas.

Tasmanian CalfWays Action Plan: Partnership with TasFarmers.

AgFest: Connect with farmers and agribusiness, supporting innovation, knowledge sharing and capability.

Tas Innovation Hub: Partnership supporting dairy farmers and industry.

New South Wales

Extension priorities

Strengthen farm business management
Improve understanding of profit drivers through practical extension, peer learning and business analysis tools.

Lift feed and herd productivity
Focus on young stock, pasture, nutrition, milk quality and mastitis management.

Attract, retain and develop talent
Support farming teams with employment, career and leadership pathways.

Key partnerships

Dairy NSW: Shared delivery of regional extension, workforce and farm business initiatives.

Discussion Groups: Dairy NSW and NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development partnership.

Climate Smart Feedbase: Collaboration between Dairy NSW, Subtropical Dairy, Murray Dairy and QDPI.

South Australia

Extension priorities

Improve farm business performance
Build business capability through benchmarking, planning, risk management and financial tools.

Increase homegrown feed productivity
Improve pasture production, utilisation, feed quality and forage decision-making.

Build industry capability and resilience
Support practical learning, discussion groups, peer engagement and workforce capability.

Key partnerships

DairySA: Shared extension delivery, industry engagement and regional priority setting.

South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association: Collaboration on industry capability, advocacy and resilience.

Western Australia

Extension priorities

Strengthen farm business performance
Build capability through benchmarking, risk management and whole-farm planning.

Increase homegrown feed productivity
Improve pasture production, utilisation, feed quality and grazing management.

Enhance nutritional management
Build nutrition capability through practical training in feed quality, diet balancing, supplementary feeding and body condition management to support herd performance and profitability.

Key partnerships

Western Dairy: Shared planning, delivery and evaluation.

Healthy Estuaries WA: Led by Western Dairy, in partnership with WA Government to support nutrient management and environmental outcomes.

Farm Business Resilience Program: Led by Western Dairy, in partnership with the Future Drought Fund and WA Government.

WA Farmers and WA Dairy Industry Working Group.

Western Victoria

Extension priorities

Manage people and build workforce capability
Strengthen workforce capability, leadership, safety and people management practices.

Increase homegrown feed productivity
Improve pasture production, feeding decisions and nutrient use efficiency to reduce seasonal risk.

Strengthen farm business performance
Build capability in budgeting, benchmarking, business analysis and risk management to support profitability, resilience and long-term success.

Key partnerships

WestVic Dairy: Shared planning, delivery and evaluation.

CALD workforce engagement: Gardiner Foundation partnership strengthening recruitment and retention capability.

Sustainable Agriculture Program: Partnership with Catchment Management Authorities and the Natural Heritage Trust.



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Disclaimer

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