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\$6.5m research partnership to boost Australian dairy industry

Focus on reducing nitrogen fertiliser use in pasture production

The Australian dairy industry is set to benefit from a new \$6.5 million partnership between the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) and Dairy Australia.

The substantial five-year agreement will deliver a national dairy research and industry development program to drive profitability and sustainability for Australian dairy farmers.

TIA Dairy Leader, Dr James Hills said the program - called Dairy HIGH 2 (short for 'high integrity grass-fed herds') - would focus on feedbase research to help dairy farmers maintain efficient, profitable and sustainable pasture based dairy systems into the future.

"We are setting an ambitious target to help dairy farmers grow the same amount of dry forage matter from irrigated pasture, produce the same amount of milk solids per hectare, but halve the amount of nitrogen fertiliser," Dr Hills said.

Dairy Australia Managing Director, Dr David Nation, said the investment with TIA was an extension of a successful research partnership first commenced in 2012.

"The research is targeting significant sustainability gains in pasture production through efficient nitrogen fertiliser use and the reduction of a key input cost for dairy farms. It will directly benefit farmers in temperate pasture based dairy regions across Australia."

TIA Interim Director, Professor Michael Rose, said the partnership recognised TIA's expertise in delivering dairy-specific research and industry development.

"Our dairy research program continues to go from strength to strength. This new partnership combined with the recent investment in our TIA Dairy Research Facility from the State Government and University of Tasmania will result in \$11 million invested in TIA's dairy research over the next five years," Professor Rose said.

"We are proud to lead a nationally-relevant program from Tasmania that will help future proof the industry and ensure that dairy farms are sustainable and better equipped to face long-term challenges."

A key part of the program will be the establishment of farmlets or 'mini farms' to test research theories under real farm conditions.

This innovative approach to research is not happening anywhere else in Australia and will involve managing four separate dairy herds under different pasture mixes at the TIA

Dairy Research Facility in Elliott, North West Tasmania.

"The advantage of the farmlet approach is that it's focused on the whole farming system. This means we can do a really good comparison of different scenarios to identify the benefits and issues that dairy farms will face on their properties," Dr Hills said.

"The results will be highly relevant to farmers, who will be able to see the outcome of the way the herd is managed, and the impact different approaches have on their entire business."

The partnership incorporates a range of other activities within Dairy HIGH 2 including:

- Value-adding measures for non-replacement dairy calves.
- Pasture coaching and advanced workshops
- Dairy benchmarking and Dairy Business of the Year Awards
- Business groups
- On-farm discussion groups

Media contacts:

Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture: 0418 229 864 | phoebe.bobbi@utas.edu.au

Dairy Australia: 03 9694 3829 | 0475 409 084 | media@dairyaustralia.com.au

Information released by:

Communications Office

University of Tasmania

+61 3 6226 2124 | Communications.Office@utas.edu.au

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and the Tasmanian Government