

The Northern Dairyfarmer

APRIL/MAY 2015

Flood recovery continues

KEY POINTS

- QDO working with farmers to assess cyclone fall-out
- Dairy damage approaching \$5 million
- Disaster assistance application lodged



Leesa Ison, Black & Gold Dairies, Monto, Qld, with a dairy cow in the leftover flood waters and debris washed up to the watering trough. Photo: Sarah Coulton, Queensland Country Life.

THE Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) has been working with affected farmers and the greater industry in assessing and responding to the damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Marcia in February.

Farms throughout Central Queensland and down to the Sunshine Coast were affected to varying degrees, with a range of impacts experienced by farms, both from severe wind damage from Marcia and the accompanying rainfall that caused flooding.

Some regions received more than 500 millimetres of rain in four days. There were also serious accusations that the Callide Dam water release exacerbated problems for farmers in the Callide Valley.

Three dairy farms to the north of Rockhampton were directly hit by the eye of the cyclone. Impacts include downed powerlines, loss of telecommunications, roofs off sheds and houses, infrastructure and fence damage, crop destruction and farm isolation.

Across the region from Rockhampton to Monto there was a lot of road and bridge damage. QDO calculated that the combined losses and impacts on the worst-affected dairy farms across the Central Queensland region approached \$5 million.

The worst-affected farmers suffered impacts ranging from \$500,000 to \$800,000. This was another massive blow for these farmers, who had suffered two other floods and a drought since early 2011.

QDO, with support from Parmalat, Subtropical Dairy, Dairy Australia and departmental staff, has been working across the industry to help assess the full extent of the damage and to plan and co-ordinate the delivery of

support services. QDO has prepared an application for additional disaster assistance for affected dairyfarmers, which QDO has lodged with the Queensland Government.

QDO, with support from processor and departmental staff, has also contacted farmers along the Mary River to check on impacts and to assess if there is a case to seek disaster assistance from the government.

It will monitor the situation as farmers get to further inspect the after-effects and assess the ability of crops to recover.

Anyone who needs assistance or advice or is concerned about another farmer is encouraged to contact QDO, phone (07) 3236 2955.

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Photo: Lothlorien Contender Renita-Red & Bralock Connection Merle, Bralock Jerseys, Berry NSW

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Photo: Don, Bruce & Claire Glasgow, Bena Vic

BEEF

Athol Economou - Violet Town - FERTILITY

Athol runs 300 Euro-British cows and usually has around 10% empty cows. He has used Fertility Plus ad lib in the paddock over the past 12 months and has lifted conception rates by 3%.

John & Sally McVean - Corryong - GRASS TETANY

They run 250 cross bred cows as a vealer operation and since using Fertility Plus, have not lost any cows to Grass Tetany. John believes Fertility Plus has also helped with milk fever and mastitis. Has used Fertility Plus for the past two years, with only two cows empty this year.

Robert & Tim Hayes - Tarcombe Herefords - Euroa

Used Fertility Plus to successfully control Grass Tetany for the past two years.

Duncan Newcomen - Ashwood Park Charolais - Yea

Used Fertility Plus to eliminate Grass Tetany and has found that cattle that were having silent heats are now cycling strongly.

Pam Shelley - Kaludah Herefords - Cooma

Pam was getting very low conception rates in the AI programs with cows having silent heats or not cycling. Since feeding Fertility Plus, the cows are cycling and getting in calf. Cows only take Fertility Plus when they need it.

DAIRY

John & Gemma Monk - Kyabram

Improved conception rate in last Spring joining, up by 10% in their 300 cow herd.

Justin & Brooke Evans - Three Creeks Illawarra's - Greta

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Funding continued for YDN

I AM pleased to announce that Subtropical Dairy and Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation have secured funding to continue our Young Dairy Network through to mid-2018.

In addition to YDN, this funding from the Federal Department of Social Services will also see us pilot new networks for farmers with some more experience, virtual groups and provide training in information technology.

During February, Cyclone Marcia had a major impact on a number of dairy businesses in Central Queensland. A few farms received significant structural damage with many suffering losses in fodder. A number of farms had their dairies inundated.

Subtropical Dairy in conjunction with QDO and Parmalat supported milking technicians from Delaval to service these dairies as well as holding lunches and dinners talking with farmers about what support was available to assist with recovery.

March also saw the publication of the new e-newsletter from Subtropical Dairy called *Beyond Horizons*.

This newsletter fills a gap in the northern Australian dairy industry where good ideas and outcomes between regions and networks were not being shared. I hope you find this publication useful.

In the last edition of the *Northern Dairyfarmer*, I introduced our new part-time Dairy Australia extension co-ordinators Viv, Belinda and Katina. I am pleased to announce that Niilo Gobius has been contracted to deliver interim services in Far North Queensland through to the end of June this year.

Niilo is an ex-dairy researcher from Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries Queensland (DAFFQ) at Mutdapilly and has a wealth of extension and development experience.



Ross McInnes
Chair
Subtropical Dairy

During the next few months, Subtropical Dairy has various workshops planned covering grazing management (incorporating farm business management principles), Cups On Cups Off, activities through Young Dairy Network and energy efficiency workshops in conjunction with QDO. Your participation in these workshops would be greatly appreciated.



QDO set policies for dairy growth

WITH the installation of the new Labor minority government, many Queenslanders are wondering what the agenda will be for the new government.

Will it be a well-considered fresh start, will it throw in any and all ideas and see what floats, or will it be a back to the future situation where Labor undoes the positive and negative policies of the LNP and tries to continue where it left off three years ago?

The QDO congratulates Annastacia Palaszczuk and her Labor party team on their win and looks forward to working constructively with the new government, including new Minister for Agriculture, Bill Byrne, to further enhance the rural sector in this state.

We have already met with the Minister in a number of forums and look forward to working with him on long-term plans for the industry.

To help in this, QDO has developed a range of policies that will help rural industries especially dairy grow and earn more for the state.

Key in this is maintaining a strong biosecurity system especially animal biosecurity to maintain our freedom from many exotic diseases.

This includes maintaining freedom from Bovine Johnes Disease and maintaining and expanding the area and security of the cattle tick-free zone.

The most crucial issue for many industries and particularly intensive-type agricultural industries such as dairy is the cost of energy, in particular electricity.

QDO would also like to see the new government investigate ways to make the domestic milk market function better and in a fairer manner all along the value chain from the farmgate to the retail outlet.



Brian Tessmann
President
Queensland Dairyfarmers'
Organisation



The Northern

Dairyfarmer

The Northern Dairyfarmer magazine is a joint industry owned and operated publication targeted at delivering the latest research and development information and industry news to dairyfarmers and industry stakeholders of the northern dairy industry. *The Northern Dairyfarmer* is published on about the 13th of every second month in February, April, June, August, October and December.

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Mailing and distribution

The Northern Dairyfarmer is distributed to dairyfarmers throughout Queensland and northern NSW. If you are a dairyfarmer and are not receiving a copy, contact: Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation PO Box 13061, George Street Post Shop, Brisbane, Qld, 4003
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Editorial contributions

Editorial contributions are welcome, but no responsibility can be taken for their loss. Copy is preferred by email in Word or text-only format with pictures and graphics as 300dpi JPGs. Deadline is two months before publication.

Printing



Published by:
Agricultural Publishers Pty Ltd
ABN 55 000 560 430

ISSN 1833-8887

Flood recovery work underway

KEY POINTS

- Flood waters recede but issues remain
- Restoring fencing a priority
- Understand impact of flood on soils

CYCLONE Marcia that brought devastating winds and torrential rain to central Queensland has well and truly passed, and everyone's focus has now turned to recovery, getting the farm back up and running as quickly as possible.

For dairyfarmers from Rockhampton through to Monto this will involve a lot of fencing, testing and repairing irrigation pumps and equipment and pad-dock rehabilitation.

Driving through the area now it is hard to believe that the flats at Jambin or the creek flats at Monto were under metres of water. Three weeks of hot streamy weather since the cyclone has caused the surface to dry out in many loca-

tions and the soil cracks are starting to appear again.

Although if you dig down several centimetres, there is good subsurface moisture.

Now that the flood water has receded, there is a chance to get out and do some fencing with the priority being the boundary fences.

For cattle movement, this is essential. Many farms through these areas lost several kilometres of fencing and with the help of Blaze Aid this is starting to be repaired.

During the coming weeks and months there are going to be lingering issues from this flood that will still need to be overcome.

Animal health issues that come with flood will remain, affecting milk quality and volume.

The loss of crops will exacerbate the autumn feed gap, leading to many farmers going in with early winter crops in order to fill this gap.

The soil health and nutrient levels will have been affected



Cyclone Marcia's impacts included roofs off sheds and houses.

due to the flood waters and waterlogged conditions.

During this rehabilitating time it is important for farmers to take into account the effect of the flooding when planning the next crop.

Soluble nutrient such as nitrogen and sulphur will have been stripped from the soil so typical fertiliser applications may not supply the right amount in the future. The flood water can affect soil health, compact the soil, lead to dispersive soils, and reduce organic carbon levels, which can affect the next crop.

With the good levels of subsurface moisture present and the

large seed bank brought in with the flood water, the weeds are likely to come up in force, and this should be taken in to account when planning the next crop. How are these weeds going to be controlled in crops?

It is a mad rush to recover from these events, but proper planning needs to happen now so these potential problems don't hang around.

Seek advice if problems linger, get a soil test to check on soil nutrient levels and soil health. Category C assistance has been announced, see what help is available through this and use it. ND

Narrow escape from cyclone's full force

NORTH Coast New South Wales agricultural industries dodged a bullet in February, with the extreme weather fallout of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Marcia's Queensland rampage not as severe as originally forecast.

While rain wasn't needed, the widespread falls of about 200 millimetres between Coffs Harbour and the Queensland border caused only minor flooding on farms and very little crop and pasture loss or infrastructure damage.

The cloudy, breezy weather that followed was ideal for preventing further losses where crops and fields sat under water.

However, most industries were left looking desperately for sunny days.

Extensive warning of the

event meant stock was able to be moved to higher ground and pumps pulled up in plenty of time.

Local Land Services (LLS) North Coast livestock officer Nathan Jennings said it was unlikely the event would force any handfeeding but pastures that were drenched declined significantly in quality.

Light rain in the days after the deluge was effective in washing silt off paddocks but producers needed to monitor pasture recovery and be aware of the nutritional needs of their stock at the time, Mr Jennings said.

Where stock had to congregate in smaller areas, producers also needed to look out for the possibility of poisonous plant

consumption, stress-related pneumonia and worm burdens, LLS veterinarians said.

With soil profiles full, continued rain this autumn could cause serious problems in terms of pasture and crop losses.

"Tall, mature setaria and Rhodes grass will drop in quality quickly under those conditions," Mr Jennings said.

North Coast Oilseeds president Paul Fleming said ongoing rainy weather had the potential to cause as much damage to the region's promising soybean crop as a flood.

"We need sunshine now to avoid disease issues," he said.

"At the moment we've handled the big rain and are still on track to have better-than-average yields

but the next few weeks will be critical."

Milk producers wanting to cut silage are also tearing their hair out as they wait for dry weather.

Norco director and Lismore, NSW, district dairyfarmer Leigh Shearman said the region's farmers relied on conserved summer feed and it would be a big strain on resources if silage could not be produced.

While milk tankers were diverted during the deluge, the pre-warning meant pick-ups were well coordinated ahead and after the event, Ms Shearman said.

Dairyfarmers now should be monitoring pasture quality and watching for lameness and mastitis.

— SHAN GOODWIN

Range of cyclone assistance available

KEY POINTS

- **Declarations made for assistance in several areas**
- **Provides range of payments and support**
- **Those outside area can apply for individual declaration**

AT THE time of writing, State and Federal Governments had enacted Category C Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) assistance for the shires of Livingstone, Rockhampton, and a portion of the Banana LGA (west of Baralaba and the Cooper and Banana Ranges) and a portion of the North Burnett LGA (west of the Gayndah-Mt Perry Road and north of the Burnett Highway and north of the Eidsvold-Theo-

dore Road). See <www.disaster.qld.gov.au> for information.

The Category C assistance makes available special assistance grants of up to \$25,000.

In addition under Category B, which covers a wider area, concessional loans for primary producers, working capital loans and freight subsidies for fodder are available. Information on the special assistance grants and loans is available through QRAA phone 1800 623 946 or visit website <www.qraa.qld.gov.au>.

Information on freight subsidies for things such as fodder and emergency supplies is available via the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) phone 132 523 or visit <<https://www.daff.qld.gov.au/environment/disaster-and-emergency-assistance/agency-disaster-support/relief-assistance-freight-subsidies>>.

Eligible individuals in the Banana, Central Highlands, Gladstone, Livingstone, Rockhampton, Woorabinda, Cherbourg, Bundaberg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, North and South Burnett regional council areas can also apply for the Disaster Recovery Payment.

People eligible for the Disaster Recovery Payment, who have lost or suffered significant damage to their homes or suffered injury as a result of the disaster, can access a one-off payment of \$1000 per adult and \$400 for each child.

This assistance has tighter criteria for access than in previous natural disasters, regarding issues such as damage to homes and injury. QDO has noted that previous experience in natural disasters has meant that applying for this assistance can be frustrating and difficult.

However, it encourages eligi-

ble farmers to persist and apply if they are eligible and in need.

Find out more about this payment from the Department of Human Services phone 1800 2266.

People who are unemployed as a result of the disaster can apply for the Disaster Recovery Allowance.

This provides for up to 13 weeks equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance for eligible Australian residents. Visit <<http://www.disasterassist.gov.au/FactSheets/Pages/DisasterRecoveryAllowance.aspx>>.

QDO has posted or delivered assistance information packs to dairyfarmers in all of the declared areas. The QDO asks impacted farmers to avail themselves of the assistance and not to self-assess their eligibility and ask for help to apply for assistance if needed. **ND**

Flood hits Gympie dairies

By Kate Stark,
Queensland Country Life

STOIC dairyfarmer Andrew Burnett felt the impact of Cyclone Marcia with floodwaters tearing through his property in February.

He worked to fix more than two kilometres of fencing, but said the 16.5-metre flood was moderate compared with the 2013 floods, and only one of seven in the past five years to affect his business.

"We're downstream from Gympie on the junction of the Wide Bay Creek and the Mary River," Mr Burnett said.

"It's a good place when it is dry — that's why we bought the farm back in 1995 — but it's not when it's wet. We do go under water."

Living and working on the property with his wife, Fiona, and two young sons, Mr Burnett said there was little that could be done to prevent future flooding in the area.

"It's just the nature of the beast," he said. "The Bureau of Meteorology do a pretty good job.

"There were lots of warnings and the best thing I can use is accurate information."

Mr Burnett said the series of floods had forced him to evolve his operation with basic preparation measures put in place to prevent stock and machine losses.

"We're pretty well drilled now," he said.

"All the pumps and cattle were up and any loose infrastructure like grain feeders and troughs were all up in the sheds. We sort of build everything to be movable."

Mr Burnett acknowledged that while the property had received ample rain, there were many other farmers still struggling.

"To read the *Queensland Country Life*, it actually makes me feel guilty that we've had all this rain.

"And yes, we've had some flooding and it's a bit upsetting in the short-term, but a couple of hours' west, they're just struggling. If only I could give half of it away — it's just not fair." **ND**



Andrew Burnett inspects his fence lines after floodwaters have receded from Cyclone Marcia.
Photo: Rod Green, *Queensland Country Life*

Feed a priority for flood preparedness

KEY POINTS

- Farm faces regular floods
- Causes problems for animals and feed
- Actions taken to mitigate risks

KEN and Kendal Bryants' dairy is on the lower reaches of the Cooper's Creek catchment at Bexhill, Northern NSW. They experience flooding on their farm almost every year — they just don't know how many times it will happen or its severity. During most years, a major flood goes across almost 100% of the milking area on their farm.

There is sometimes little warning when the water level rises and they are often the first farm in the region to be flooded.

The main impacts of flooding on the Bryants' farm are:

- irrigation pumps going under water;
- moving and feeding stock during and after the flood;
- moving machinery;
- ensuring silage is moved to the feedpad before the road is cut; and
- having some quality fodder on hand before flood season.

The biggest impacts on farms in general are:

- disrupted electricity supply for milking and cooling;
- milk storage capacity when pickups are interrupted;
- feed availability and accessibility; and
- herd health issues such as mastitis and lameness.

The 2013 floods hit the Bryant's farm harder than previ-

Table 1: Estimated costs of floods to Ken and Kendal Bryant farm.

| Estimated Costs | \$ |
|--|------------------|
| Corn 850 tonnes lost @ \$55/tonne (replacement costs) | \$46,750 |
| Corn growing costs eg. cultivation, planting, spraying | \$30,000 |
| Loss of production estimated 100,000 litres | \$50,000 |
| Total estimated costs | \$126,750 |

ous floods. The Bryants' farm, and the northern NSW dairying region in general, had experienced a succession of climate extremes.

Silage stockpiles and fodder reserves, which were usually full, had been exhausted dealing with the abnormal weather. The floods also came early that year, rather than in the autumn, so no hay had been organised. Some extra triticale fodder had arrived on the Bryants' farm but it wasn't milking quality feed.

During the flood, pastures were decimated and the effects were evident for months afterwards. The weather was hot post-flood and cooked the pastures so the home-grown feed didn't get going until the spring.

The impacts of the flood continued into the following season when the lack of corn silage impacted the farm business.

The 25 hectares of corn that would usually add 1000 tonnes of conserved silage to the business yielded only 160 tonnes, which left a huge feed gap and a big feed expense. This was compounded by the cost of planting and growing the corn. The costs for this replanting have become longer term debt.

Table 1 shows the estimated dollar costs of the floods.

Hindsight is a great thing. The Bryants have made changes to their business to mitigate the effects of flood and, in particular, feed management before the flood season.

Their feed system is a partial mixed ration (PMR) system for nine months of the year. Cows are on ryegrass pastures during the winter and spring and tropical grasses and forages during summer.

Some 1000 tonnes of silage are conserved each year to fill feed gaps and sure up feed supply during flooding. Extra paddocks off-farm have been leased to grow this feed.

A concrete feedpad to accommodate 160 cows has been built as part of the farm's flood plan.

The Bryants have also bought a 50 kilovolt-amp power take-off (PTO) generator to cover any electricity outages due to extreme weather.

Mr Bryant said the lost production and mastitis problems resulting from missed milkings was a huge risk to the profitability of the business.

In the future the Bryants would like to ensure that they



Ken and Kendal Bryant have taken a number of actions to mitigate the risk of floods on their northern NSW farm.

don't get caught in the flood season with so little 'milker quality' conserved fodder on hand.

"The trouble with floods is you don't know when they will come," Mr Bryant said. "We should have had more hay on hand, just in case, and we wouldn't have lost so much production.

"If the natural disaster is widespread the fodder we are chasing as feed is often in short supply and expensive. We can't predict the floods so we need to be better prepared for whenever it may come.

"It's a case of minimising the risk to the business."

Contact: the NSW Department of Primary Industries Flood Ready Dairying page at <<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/flood/current-situation/flood-ready-dairying-on-the-north-coast-of-nsw>>. There are also links to other flood and disaster management resources from this page.

Help to find and protect stock in cyclone recovery

BIOSECURITY Queensland is providing advice to livestock owners to help safeguard the welfare of animals and assist with recovery after recent severe weather associated with Tropical Cyclone Marcia.

Biosecurity Queensland

land director Dr Ashley Bunce said: "Flooding may have caused livestock to be stranded, washed down river and creek systems and displaced by wandering through areas where fences are down.

"Anyone who finds stray

livestock can contact Biosecurity Queensland phone 13 25 23 to identify the owner of the livestock and assist their safe return."

Intensive livestock industry producers, who have lost power or are experi-

encing feed shortages, can contact the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for advice and management options.

For more information on animal welfare visit <www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au> or phone 13 25 23.

Short-term challenges, long-term goals

KEY POINTS

- Alarm bells for Federal Coalition
- Partnership with government vital
- 10-year plan for growth

By Brian Tessmann, QDO president

THE massive swing back to the Australian Labor Party in January's Queensland State Election shows that Australian voters will not accept arrogant behaviour by government or being dictated to or ignored.

It also shows that the Australian public has little appetite for bad news or tough measures and decisions, especially if it might impact them or their household.

This does not bode well for Australia's ability to handle the dark economic clouds that are in sight.

Three years ago I commented following the massive Liberal National Party (LNP) win that it must be remembered that with great power comes great responsibility and that massive electoral

wins can sometimes be a curse as they lead to arrogance and overconfidence.

This whole episode should ring alarm bells for the Coalition at a federal level, and lessons must be learned including the fact that some personalities just will not change.

During the election coverage, I was stunned by how little mention was made by most commentators to Queensland's high level of debt, as if it was an unimportant side issue and not in fact at the core of many other problems and issues concerning people at both state and federal level.

Unfortunately for agriculture, the election campaign was almost entirely centred around some of the more emotive issues such as law and order and asset leasing or sale.

This was disappointing, as I believe that agricultural industries, including dairy, are vital industries for government to enhance and grow if Queensland and for that matter Australia is to improve the economy, create jobs and increase profitable exports, which is the critical need if the state is to reduce debt.

Australian agriculture is pre-

dicted to emerge into a golden age by many analysts around the world in response to the growing demand for food and fibre and, in particular, protein in Asia.

If this is to happen, then governments of both persuasions must put in place policies that facilitate the expansion of sustainable and profitable agricultural production and access to high value markets.

The QDO steadfastly believes that a strong working partnership between rural industries and the state government is of vital importance if we are to manage or resolve the industry's current and future problems and realise future opportunities.

During the time of the previous Labor administration, industry and government efficiently worked together on a number of initiatives to address environmental and natural resource issues and problems that showed results for the environment, industry and the state as a whole.

These programs could now be extended to assist in providing some mitigation of the impacts of the current exorbitant electricity prices.

We also believe the govern-

ment should commit resources to develop the Queensland Dairy Industry Plan to set out new strategic opportunities for growth during the next 10 years and to provide support for key initiatives.

The incoming government should also provide enhanced support for industry and market development initiatives for market diversification and high value export opportunities for fresh milk and other dairy products, as well as for dairy livestock and genetics.

Support should be given to investigating options to enhance the market power of Queensland dairyfarmers including enhanced co-operative structures and improving and enhancing collective bargaining provisions.

These measures should be combined with an enhanced commitment to biosecurity, particularly animal biosecurity and the drought and natural disaster recovery programs.

So we urge the incoming government to work with QDO to enhance and expand the northern dairy industry for the benefit of all Queenslanders now and in the future.

ND

ADIC welcomes Basin buyback cap

THE Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) has welcomed the Australian Government's announcement that it will introduce legislation to cap water buybacks in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) at 1500 giganalitres (GL).

The 1500GL cap provides dairyfarmers in the Murray-Darling Basin with much-needed certainty about future water availability to sustain their business.

At the same time, environmental water can continue to be recovered through water-saving infrastructure projects.

ADIC chair Noel Campbell said the government's announcement gave farm-

ers and processors in the basin, where more than 25% of Australia's milk was produced, the confidence to continue dairying.

"Almost 2000 dairy farms and 16 major milk-processing factories are located in the basin, with more than 12,000 people in the region whom rely on the industry for their livelihood," Mr Campbell said.

"With 97% of those farms relying on irrigation for pasture and feed production, capping buybacks at 1500GL gives farmers assurance that they will be able to continue adapting their practices to produce more milk with less water."

Dairyfarmers in the basin

have proved flexible and responsible users of water in the past, steadily adapting their practices in the past 20 years to meet their limited access to water.

At the same time, they have actively participated in programs to return more water to the environment and increase water infrastructure efficiency on and off-farm. Mr Campbell said a clear plan was now required to legislate the cap, confirm the extended period for buybacks, and the delivery of 600GL in infrastructure works and 650GL in environmental works.

"This is the triple-bottom line approach we have sought from the beginning,



Some 97% of dairy farms in the Murray Darling Basin relying on irrigation for pasture and feed production.

and we urge all parties to support this outcome," he said.

Introducing regional co-ordinators

Dairy Australia Subtropical Dairy part-time extension co-ordinators are:

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Email:
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Katina Trout

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Belinda has been working in the dairy industry in Queensland since 1995, following her studies in Agricultural Science at the University of Queensland. She worked for 10 years in a farm liaison-extension role with the Department of Primary Industries and with Dairy Farmers. During that time she lived at Toowoomba, Qld, and spent most of her time working with farmers. In her more recent roles, Belinda has worked with farmers in the Young Dairy Network and on industry projects and natural disaster response teams. Belinda has enjoyed working with dairyfarmers and in their businesses and has built good working relationships with farmers and some great friendships. Belinda and her husband, Mark, have three children and live in Highfields near Toowoomba.

Raised on a mixed farming property in Queensland, Katina graduated with a degree in agribusiness and later obtained a postgraduate certificate in Marketing Management. Katina worked for several years in various agricultural industries, including roles with the Cotton Trading Corporation, Incitec Pivot Fertilisers and Bayer CropScience. In addition to her agribusiness experience, Katina has worked in brand, product and marketing management roles in the member services and tourism sectors. Katina currently has a marketing and design business specialising in agribusiness, undertaking brand, promotional and communications work for a number of private and corporate clients.

Since graduating from the University of New England with a degree in Rural Science, Viv has worked in the cotton and dairy industry.

With a background in sales/marketing, business management, precision agriculture and natural resource management she started her role as program manager of the Young Dairy Network in 2009.

During this time Viv has worked with young dairyfarmers, the co-ordinating team and stakeholders of the YDN to grow and continue the development of the network.

Viv and her husband, Doug, have two children and live at Hampton, north of Toowoomba.

Foot-and-Mouth preparedness program under way

FOOT-AND-MOUTH Disease (FMD) is widely recognised as the single greatest animal disease threat in Australia, with an outbreak having the potential to cause devastating financial and social impacts.

In recognition of the serious effects a FMD outbreak would have, a dedicated FMD preparedness program has been established and work is under way to make Queensland the most FMD-ready state in Australia.

Queensland chief biosecurity officer Dr Jim Thompson said the three-year program would increase FMD prevention and preparedness activities and improve response and recovery capacity and ca-

pability in the event of an outbreak.

“A large outbreak of FMD would bring Queensland’s livestock industries and affected local communities to a standstill,” Dr Thompson said.

“Australia has been free from FMD since the 1800s, and we want to keep it that way.

“Financial modelling estimates a multi-state outbreak of FMD would cost the Australian agriculture industry up to \$52 billion, including the cost of long-term international livestock and livestock product trade restrictions.

“An outbreak would also have significant social impacts, with international cases of the disease having serious implications for in-

dividuals, families and local communities.”

Dr Thompson said one of the key components of the FMD preparedness program would be increasing prevention activities to reduce the risk of the disease entering Queensland.

“Prevention is the best cure so we will be working to improve early warning surveillance and implementing a communication campaign to raise awareness of the risk of swill-feeding and to ensure those in close contact with susceptible species are aware of FMD symptoms and reporting expectations,” he said.

“We will also work closely with industry and all tiers of government to deliver a range of improvements

that will ensure Queensland is well placed to respond quickly and effectively if an outbreak of FMD occurs.”

Dr Thompson said key FMD preparedness program deliverables would, among others things, include:

- participation in Exercise Odyssey, a series of activities designed to enhance state and national preparedness for the implementation of a national livestock standstill in the event of an outbreak of FMD;
- improved capability and capacity to respond to an outbreak of FMD through enhanced planning, policies and procedures; and
- more efficient quality financial, IT and document management systems to effectively manage an outbreak of FMD.

Delving into business of dairy

KEY POINTS

- Intensive operation with 3 times a day milking
- Australian Dairy Conference business focus
- Learnt language of finance

By Sue Dowling

BUSY ... is a word familiar to every dairyfarmer, so busy there are more jobs than there are hours in the day. With so many jobs all with a priority ranking it is easy to be so flat out doing the day-to-day stuff that strategic planning gets put on the back burner.

With two small children and milking three times a day, life for Rachael Parkes and Ged Mullins doesn't get much more industrious.

Rachael and Ged own and operate Ellerby Dairy at Ellangowan, 70 kilometres south of Toowoomba.

Visiting Ellerby, which was a greenfield site five years ago, it is easy to see the initiative and resourcefulness of this enterprising young couple.

The decision for them to attend the 2015 Australian Dairy Conference (ADC) was not a matter of "how can we afford to go but rather can we afford not to go".

The conference at Launceston, Tasmania, was no ordinary conference.

With the intense direct agenda this conference didn't suit every-

body. ADC set about to seek diligent, engaged, eager delegates willing to work on the farm business as well as in it.

Delegates came equipped with actual farm data to find exactly how their farm businesses compared and were challenged to think outside their comfort zone, all eager to seek out new strategies and ways to improve their business.

Two key drivers for dairy business success discussed were productivity and profitability.

Physical on-farm performances such as milk yield per cow, growth rate per calf per day, tonnes of feed/hectare and litres of milk per tonnes of dry matter fed were evaluated.

Just like farmers assessing the health of their herds, delegates were urged to perform a business health check.

Participants learnt the language of dairyfarming finance and understanding financial reports.

Looking at the Earnings before Interest and Tax (EBIT) takes away the individual differences in capital structures so one business can be compared to another.

Measuring the gain (hopefully) over equity and debt or Return on Assets (ROA) was also addressed. The individual debt versus equity ratio was also discussed. If the interest paid is lower than the ROA then more debt can be used to grow, but if the interest is higher than the ROA — stop borrowing. Increase equity levels or lift the ROA before borrowing.



Rachael Parkes and Ged Mullins are working to build their dairy business.

Rachael noted that all the farms visited were producing half as much milk per cow compared with Ellerby, which uses a total mixed ration (TMR) system, and paid about \$12,000 per hectare more for their land, but were successful because they minimised cost.

One particular farm produced double the dollar in profit per kilogram of milk solids as the average participant in the Tasmanian dairy business database.

ADC presenter John Mulvaney said: "These people are good operators with a keen eye for

productivity, have excellent cost control strategies, they do their figures regularly ... and are a bit tight."

Dairy Australia promoted the use of the new DairyBase app. Similar to the Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme, this app allows farmers to compare their business to others in Australia.

Now back at Ellerby, Rachael and Ged have the tools to evaluate the risks and gains of this diverse, multi-layered, adventure-some industry and are equipped to capitalise on any arising opportunities. ND

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Supermarket code must be mandatory

KEY POINTS

- Voluntary code needs to be stronger
- Queensland dairyfarmers still at risk
- Financial penalties needed

THE Federal Government announcement that major retailers have agreed to sign up to a voluntary 'prescribed' Food and Grocery Code of Conduct is a long-awaited step in the right direction, according to the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation.

Although it would go some way to addressing the imbalance of market power between supermarkets and suppliers, the step was not far enough.

QDO president Brian Tessmann said that while there were some positive signs with the code in-

cluding a number of aspects of the draft Mandatory Code that QDO had drafted with Australian Dairy Farmers, the QDO want that the code to be stronger, mandatory, with financial penalties and overseen by a dedicated supermarket ombudsman. The voluntary code announced has been developed by the major retailers, Coles and Woolworths, and the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

"With a raft of recent charges by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) against the major supermarkets, when the supermarkets had been previously stating they were doing no wrong, particularly Coles, this leaves us somewhat lacking trust in what they have put forward now," Mr Tessmann said.

"We do, however, acknowledge the important role the Federal Government has performed to get the code to the point where it is and while it is not everything we need,

it does address several key imbalances of market power that retailers have over suppliers."

He said Queensland dairyfarmers — who are among the most exposed to the actions of the major supermarkets around fresh milk — remained at risk without stronger action from the government. "We've seen just recently that the UK Prime Minister David Cameron has spoken about the need for a stronger code of conduct in his country, covering the whole supply chain and adding financial penalties," he said. "With a similar situation impacting farmers in Australia, it would be nice to see our Prime Minister, Tony Abbot, taking a similar supportive stance for farmers.

"There is a long list of bad behaviour by the major supermarkets in recent years when it comes to their treatment of suppliers, advertising and pricing tactics. Past experience tells us

that light touch voluntary regulation risks being insufficient.

"The havoc wrought upon the Queensland dairy industry in the last four years is just one example why a stronger mandatory code is needed.

"It is unacceptable that it has taken four years, Senate inquiries, ACCC investigations, extensive court action and litigation before major retailers agreed to treat their suppliers fairly. In the last four years many business and family lives have been damaged by the practices of major supermarkets.

"It is absolutely critical that the Federal Government strengthens the Competition and Consumer Act to outlaw predatory conduct such as the \$1 per litre campaign by supermarkets and also to introduce unfair contract laws to provide further support for Australian small business owners." **ND**

QDO briefs

Investigation into Callide Dam water release

THE State Government has announced that the Inspector General will review the process and procedures around the water release from the Callide Dam, following ongoing accusations that the water release from the dam severely exacerbated the impacts for downstream farmers and residents.

Seasonal climate conditions remain neutral

THE latest Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) National Climate and Water Briefings said unusual conditions in the tropical Pacific might increase the chance of El Niño in 2015.

International models surveyed by the Bureau have strengthened its outlooks

for the likelihood of El Niño, with all eight models suggesting ocean temperatures will exceed El Niño thresholds by mid-year.

However, model outlooks from February to May generally have lower accuracy than outlooks made at other times of year.

The bureau's ENSO Tracker remains at El Niño Watch.

Queensland experimental SPOTA-1 forecasts are updated following each BOM briefing and are made available on the Long Pad-dock website.

QDO attends industry briefing from new Premier

QUEENSLAND Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) chief executive officer Adrian Peake attended a briefing at Queensland Parliament House where he joined other industry leaders in hearing from Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk,

Treasurer Curtis Pitt, Deputy Premier Jackie Trad and several Ministers.

More than half of the new Cabinet was in attendance, sending a strong message of collaboration to industry in the early days of the new government.

The briefing heard that the incoming government faced significant economic challenges but that it was planning a consultative approach and was eager to hear new ideas from industry.

Two new videos on QDO YouTube channel

QDO has created two new videos for the QDO YouTube channel, showcasing farmers who are participating in the Australian Government Reef Programme.

The videos feature Keith and Andrew Walmsley of Malanda and Dennis Byrnes of Yungaburra, as well as Ross Henry with Dairying Better N Better. The vid-

eos can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaSURS6tQ89_INrbtGLnFTQ>.

Promoting dairy message

DAIRY Australia (DA) has produced a free Legendairy resource kit for farmers keen to champion the industry.

The pack includes communications tips and tricks, including via social media platforms, postcards with imagery, promoting the eight dairy regions, and information on the Legendairy activities coming up in 2015.

Email <legendairy@dairyaustralia.com.au> to request a free copy.

And DA's new-look Discover Dairy website has been launched for the 2015 school year.

In the past three years the Discover Dairy website has been visited by about 11,500 new visitors a month.

Visit <www.dairy.edu.au/discoverdairy>.

QUALITY FORAGE LEADS TO GOOD PRODUCTION

Poor forage quality can negatively affect rumen function, performance and even lead to Sub Acute Ruminal Acidosis (SARA)

When unstable or moldy feeds are ingested by cattle, the consequences on rumen function and resulting performance can be difficult to manage and expensive to remedy.

Fed unstable forages, a cow with borderline rumen function can easily develop Sub Acute Ruminal Acidosis (SARA). When SARA occurs, rumen function isn't optimized to make the best use of any ration. SARA is simply an occupational hazard for the modern dairy cow, and costs are estimated at more than **\$1.00** per cow daily.^{1,2}

Keep Silage Stable During Feedout

Aerobic instability during feedout can often cause

Keep forages stable during feedout and help maintain rumen function — and performance.

spoilage yeasts, bacteria and mold to grow. Spoilage yeasts are found naturally on all growing crops. Once feedout surfaces are exposed to oxygen, the yeasts will start to multiply. Research-proven forage inoculants, such as **Lalsil HC** can help combat aerobic instability.

Unstable forages pose a real threat to rumen function and performance — especially during summer months when the risk of SARA can be greater.

In fact, a study showed that the presence of spoilage yeast from 10⁵ to 10⁹ colony-forming units (CFU) per gram equivalents in corn silage routinely and significantly reduced rumen pH by 0.4 units.³

Comparison of Studies Feeding Aerobically Unstable Forages

| Forage | Inclusion Rate in the Ration Dry Matter | Milk Yield Reduction | Dry Matter Intake Reduction |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Aerobically unstable high-moisture shell corn (HMSC) ⁴ | 33% ⁴ | 3.2 kgs. per cow daily ⁴ | No Change ⁴ |
| Aerobically unstable HMSC ⁵ | 29% ⁵ | 1 kg per cow daily ⁵ | No Change ⁵ |
| Aerobically spoiled corn silage ⁶ | 5.4% ⁶ | — | -7.4% reduction ⁶ |

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¹ Enemark, J.M.D. 2008. The monitoring, prevention and treatment of sub-acute ruminal acidosis: A review. *The Veterinary Journal* 176: 32-43.

² Kleen J. L. and C. Cannizzo. 2012. Incidence prevalence and impact of SARA in dairy herds. *Anim. Feed Sci. Technol.* 172: 4-8.

³ Santos M.C. et al. 2011. Spoilage yeast in silage have the potential to directly impact rumen fermentation. *J. Dairy Sci.* 94 (E-Suppl.1): 207 (Abstr.).

⁴ Hoffman P.C. & S. M. Ocker 1997. Quantification of milk yield losses associated with feeding aerobically unstable high moisture corn. *J. Dairy Sci.* 80, (Suppl.1):234 (Abstr.).

⁵ Kendall C., and D.K. Combs, and P.C. Hoffman 2002. Performance of dairy cattle fed high moisture shell corn inoculated with *Lactobacillus buchneri*. *J. Dairy Sci.* 85 (Suppl.1): 385 (Abstr.).

⁶ Whitlock, L. A. et al. 2000. Effect of level of surface spoiled silage on the value of corn silage based rations. *Cattlemen's Day*. 3 Mar. 2000: 22-24.

Not all products are available in all markets nor all claims allowed in all regions.

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Busting the myths of grazing

KEY POINTS

- Workshops to explore productivity of pastures
- Irrigation systems, fertiliser use and pasture utilisation
- Will include discussion and farm visits

SUBTROPICAL Dairy in conjunction with the team at Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland (DAFQ) will be delivering Busting the Myths of Grazing Workshops during late May and early June.

The aim of these workshops is to examine and discuss various myths around 'What affects the productivity of pastures'.

Understanding the costs and benefits of different irrigations systems, fertiliser use and efficient pasture utilisation will all be discussed during the workshops.

A session on the benefits of different forages and the effect of their utilisation, using practical



A new series of workshops will explore some of the myths around grazing such as feeding lush pasture versus feeding rank pasture.

examples, will form the basis of farmer discussions.

Ross Warren, Ray Murphy and Jordan Minniecon from the DAFQ team will be delivering the workshops that will be run in various towns throughout Queensland dairy regions. They will consist of two separate one-day workshops.

The myths to be explored will be:

- Quality versus quantity — is

precision grazing worth the effort?

- Benefit:cost of irrigation and fertiliser — is it worth turning the irrigator on?

- Balancing a grazing-based diet — when can I cut back on grain feeding?

- Benefit:cost of pasture species — what pasture species gives the best bang for buck?

- Making the best use of forage — should I graze, ensile or cult hay from the forage I produce?

Each myth will be examined using a scenario to calculate the benefits and costs of the myth. Scenarios include:

- the benefit: costs of shifting the fence versus not shifting the fence;
- the milk response of feeding rank pasture (high neutral detergent fibre [NDF]) versus lush pasture (low NDF);
- the benefit:cost of irrigation versus buying in feed; and
- the benefit:cost of automated grain feeding or splitting the herd.

The workshops will be a mixture of discussion and a visit to a farm on day two. They will run from 10am to 2pm and include morning tea and lunch. Refer to Table 1 for the dates when the workshops will be in each region.

These workshops provided by Subtropical Dairy are funded by the Australian Government Department of Industry. 

Contact: Dr Brad Granzin, Subtropical Dairy executive officer mobile: 0431 197 479, email: <brad@dairyinfo.biz> or visit <www.dairyinfo.biz>.

Table 1: Grazing myths workshops

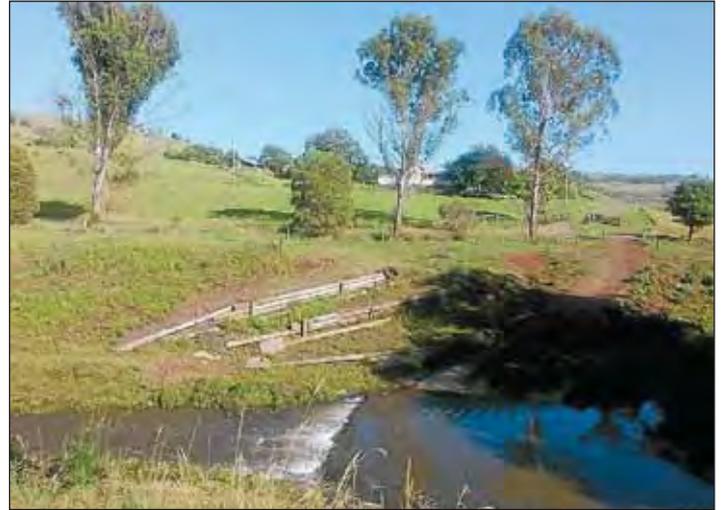
| Date | Town | Contact |
|---|------------|----------------------------|
| Busting the Myths of Grazing — Day 1 | | |
| Monday May 18 | Beaudesert | Belinda Hadow 0423 003 638 |
| Tuesday May 19 | Gatton | |
| Wednesday May 20 | Kenilworth | Viv McCollum 0428 460 380 |
| Thursday May 21 | Wondai | |
| Friday May 22 | Monto | |
| Tuesday May 26 | Malanda | Niilo Gobius 0409 105 881 |
| Busting the Myths of Grazing — Day 2 | | |
| Monday June 1 | Beaudesert | Belinda Hadow 0423 003 638 |
| Tuesday June 2 | Gatton | |
| Wednesday June 3 | Kenilworth | Viv McCollum 0428 460 380 |
| Thursday June 4 | Wondai | |
| Friday June 5 | Monto | |
| Wednesday June 10 | Malanda | Niilo Gobius 0409 105 881 |



Your Levy at Work



Stage one of the construction of a contoured bank is complete at Craig and Eileen Waddells' property.



The final version of the construction on the Waddell property with the addition of more logs and gravel to shore up the construction.

Northern NSW innovations on show

KEY POINTS

- Inaugural invention and innovation competition
- Winner: creek crossing solution
- Runner up: BBQ vaccination trolley

THE annual Wine, Dine and Unwind dinner was held in February for the NSW Far North Coast Sub Regional Team.

It was a fantastic night, achieving just what it set out to do with lots of "wine, dining and unwinding" happening.

As part of the night the inaugural Far North Coast NSW Invention and Innovation Competition kicked off at the dinner. Competition was fierce, with local dairy families submitting

worthy entries to compete for prizes to be awarded on the night.

A table of distinguished judges carefully reviewed the entries and decided to award first place to Craig and Eileen Waddells' flood-management contour ramp or bank-stabilisation system.

The Waddells' farm covers both sides of Coopers Creek. Every day the cows graze on the paddocks on the other side of the creek from the dairy.

There was no set track on the creek crossing exit, so the cows tended to walk up anywhere they pleased and this caused lots of bogging and bank slippage.

Across a number of years, in an attempt to stop this bogging and to retain the bank, the Wad-

dells constructed a series of three contoured exit ramps.

The Waddells' solution to this problem was a contoured bank construction to help the cows gain access to the bank.

Stage two of the construction — the final version, the couple hope — features the addition of more logs and gravel to shore up the earthworks.

At a total cost of about \$7000 this was a worthy winner of the FNC Innovation and Invention competition.

Coming in a close second to the Waddells were Dennis Rose and his family, with his "quirky" invention: "the BBQ vaccination trolley".

The trolley was an old barbecue from the Goolmangar Hall that had reached the end of its useful life. Mr Rose simply

made some modifications and converted it into an invaluable tool for the dairy herd health program.

The top was covered with decking boards and the drip tray was converted into a slide-out drawer.

Now on whole-herd vaccination days, everything is stored in one place that is easily accessible to all, even those who find bending down a challenge.

The invention and innovation competition will become an annual event at the FNC region's Wine, Dine and Unwind dinner and provides a great opportunity to celebrate and share all the great ideas and innovations that happen on-farm and that somehow, in their own little way, make everyday just a little bit easier.

ND



Leigh Shearman and David Binney with Eileen and Craig Waddell — winners of this year's FNC Innovation and Invention Competition.



Dennis Rose's recycled barbecue turned into a vaccination trolley.



Leigh Shearman and David Binney with Coral and Darryl Rose and Dennis and Serina Rose and their children, Laura and Tobey.

Norco's home-front focus

KEY POINTS

- Norco eyeing Sydney market
- Highlighting Australian, farmer-owned status
- Employing brand protection in China

By Shan Goodwin

PLAYING its trump card of being 100% Australian and farmer-owned, forward-thinking northern New South Wales dairy co-operative Norco is expanding its domestic footprint hot on the heels of its groundbreaking move into China.

The Lismore-based co-operative has stepped up its presence in the Sydney market significantly, partnering with a new distributor to send a range of fresh milk products plus cheeses and yoghurts to the metropolitan hub.

Norco chairman, Northern Rivers milk producer Greg McNamara, said the products were going primarily to corner stores and small independent supermarkets whose clientele tended to be big users of social media, where the message had been strong about the benefits of the farmer co-operative business model.

Norco's paid an average farm-

gate price of 53.25 cents a litre in the 2013-14 financial year — up from 51.74 the previous year and one of the highest farmgate prices in the country.

It employs more than 600 people, with the vast majority in regional areas.

"We are receiving a lot of requests for Norco milk in Sydney based on the fact we are an Australian farmer-owned company," Mr McNamara said.

"In fact, the inquiry is coming in on a daily basis from many areas outside our traditional geographical markets, with the question 'When will you be in our area?'"

Norco's leaders say the move into the Sydney market will be targeted.

Rather than take on the majors at full steam, it will be about securing a share of the market at the right margin.

General manager of Norco Foods Andrew Burns, in the co-operative's monthly bulletin, said that with Sydney being Australia's largest population base, the prospect of entering that market and challenging the multi-nationals with an Australian, farmer-owned product range was exciting.

Norco is also stretching to the north, moving into new Queensland markets in Brisbane, on the

Sunshine Coast and around Toowoomba.

Mr Burns said new trade in Brisbane had picked up an extra two million litres in the past few months, and a series of radio advertisements supported in voice by Ray Hadley and Alan Jones was about to be launched.

Meanwhile, Norco is on the front foot to safeguard its fresh milk products in China from counterfeiting, using state-of-the-art smartphone application technology.

The co-operative began shipping fresh milk to China — which is selling for \$7-\$9 a litre — last year.

By teaming up with a global supply chain standards organisation, GS1 Australia, and a brand protection platform, Authenticateit, Norco has linked its milk to a free and easy way for consumers in China to check its authenticity by scanning the barcode.

The app automatically detects the language settings on the mo-



Norco is using a mobile phone app to help safeguard its products in China from counterfeiting.

bile phone and presents all information in Chinese.

GS1 Australia, the local brand of a worldwide not-for-profit organisation that facilitates efficient international business, has played a key role in the development of Authenticateit. The package uses GS1's numbering system and global trade item number technology to provide tracking and tracing and product identification for all Norco milk products in China and to prevent copycat replications of the Norco label. ND

Sorghum crop to bounce back in 2015

Sorghum production is expected to bounce back to average levels following rainfall across much of Queensland and northern New South Wales.

According to the National Australia Bank (NAB) Agribusiness Commodity in Focus report for February, which provides a wrap-up on price and production forecasts for summer crops, sorghum is the standout, with production forecast to increase by 63.6% in 2015.

General manager of NAB Agribusiness Khan Horne said this year's crop had shown a real turn around following late rain.

"It's good to see improved

conditions and sorghum production back up to more average levels in northern NSW and the Darling Downs," Mr Horne said.

"We expect yields to be in the order of the 10-year average to slightly below, but good rain following Cyclone Marcia across the Darling Downs points to the upper end of the range at this stage.

"Sorghum prices fell in mid-2014 in line with lower international grain prices but have since trended upwards somewhat.

"We expect sorghum prices to be on par with last year, with just a 1.2% fall in Australian dollar terms, even with the surge in production.

"The falling Australian dollar will also cushion some of the impact of falling global prices for grain sorghum."

Across the other summer crops, reduced irrigation water allocations have seen a fall in area planted to cotton and rice, while feed maize is up slightly.

Cotton production is forecast to be down 46.4% this year and there are also likely to be some year-on-year price falls as changes to China's subsidy arrangements and cheaper synthetic fibres eat into demand.

Similarly, production of rice is expected to fall 17.8% and prices to be down 11%.

Lower irrigation water availability stemming from below-average inflows into Murray-Darling Basin storages in NSW was the main cause of the smaller area planted to rice this season.

On the upside, the production of feed maize is forecast to increase 9.9% based largely on an increased area planted in NSW and Queensland.

Prices are expected to be stable with a 1.3% increase.

"Overall the outlook for the season is strong and reflects a steady improvement to the expected conditions at the beginning of the year," Mr Horne said.

Foreign investment policy implications

KEY POINTS

- Govt strengthening regulation of foreign investment
- Threshold for scrutiny lowered to \$15m
- Overseas investor register introduced

By Joanne Grainger, QFF president

THE Federal Government is increasingly looking at policies that regulate foreign investment in agriculture but there is concern about whether it is taking the right approach.

The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, announced at a media event on a farm outside Canberra recently that he would be introducing a register for foreign investment and lowering the threshold for scrutiny of foreign investment in agricultural land to \$15 million.

Previously, the threshold at

which the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) scrutinised investments in agriculture was \$252 million.

There are some flaws with this new lower threshold, the most significant being that the \$15 million figure appears to have been developed without a regulatory impact statement or consideration to what it means for the broader agricultural property market.

While the \$15 million is for cumulative land assets, this figure does not include water assets — only land — which we all know are such an important part of agricultural production.

We also know from past experience that FIRB rulings can be hijacked by politicians of the day, which risks decisions being subject to short-term and populist politics.

Competent and astute overseas investors have plenty of opportunities to invest around the world in places other than

Australia, and perhaps they may unfortunately think twice about the risks involved in partnering with Australia and having their prospective investment derailed by a political whim, particularly if they have already outlaid considerable expense in getting to that point.

The changes announced by the Prime Minister risk sending a negative message to overseas investors, at a time when groups such as the Business Council of Australia have estimated that we require \$1 trillion in overseas investment in Australian agriculture by 2050.

The second part of the policy change was the announcement of the register of foreign investment.

This is the aspect of the policy that industry has long been seeking. Indeed, a robust register should be the first step in any policy change (not the second step) as it provides the data on what is actually occurring.

Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) welcomes the register as it is an important tool in understanding this important policy area.

But looking at the policy holistically, it appears the government has missed an opportunity to promote the value of agriculture as a place to do business, whether that be through local investors in family or corporate structure, or foreign investors through the same structures.

Foreign investment, of course, must be in the national interest, it must be understood and it must be on the same playing field of regulation and tax that all of us face.

But we must be open to business overseas, in line with the same open door approach that we expect in free trade agreement negotiations with our trading partners.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) is a member of QFF. QDO memberships help fund the advocacy that QFF undertakes for farmers.

Maleny Dairies looks to positives

PAYING dairyfarmers above-average prices for their milk is the secret behind the ongoing success of Sunshine Coast dairy business Maleny Dairies.

Owner Ross Hopper said his refusal to save a dollar by hitting his already cash-strapped eight local dairy suppliers was a novelty he hoped ultimately caught on around the country.

"Queensland is 120 million litres short on milk domestically a year and that's just because the price of raw milk is way too cheap and farmers are opting out," Mr Hopper said.

"The farms are that flogged now, eating in to their cash savings. It's hard work. You pay the right price for the raw milk, there is a future. You go the other way and there isn't a future."

In three years Maleny Dairies' popularity has snowballed into a staggering 27,500 Facebook fans around the world.

More than 20,000 visitors walk through its gates, making it one of the region's most sought-after tourism sites, with more than 45 staff on-site managing the day-to-day farm activities and tour responsibilities.

Mr Hopper said the dairy industry had good reason to celebrate the future, with Australia's new free trade agreement with China providing a much-needed boost, but in terms of Maleny Dairies, there was a self-sufficient ride ahead.

"Sure, previously we applied for grants and funding in the past, but we didn't fit the criteria," Mr Hopper said. "That could certainly help other farms



Maleny Dairies founder Harold Hopper with his grandson Rascal and son Ross Hopper, Maleny Dairies owner and manager.

but we don't need it anymore. We have \$2.3 million earmarked for expansions and automating and fitting this equipment in the next 18 months, which will be possible thanks to a now-streamlined good cashflow and our banks allowing us to borrow money.

"We don't need anything. We're standing on our own two feet. The (Sunshine Coast) Council believes in us and what we are doing. We're just happy. Our philosophy is to not look at the negatives — look at the positives and make the most of what we have."

Soil nutrition farm walk success

KEY POINTS

- Soil & Nutrient Management Plan
- Technical side of soil discussed
- New feedpad and roof installed

GYMPIE, Qld, region farmers visited Rodney and Sharon Skydings' dairy in January for a farm walk looking closely at soil nutrition.

Held by the Dairying Better 'n Better (DBnB) team at the property just south of Gympie,

Qld, the farm walk showed the participants the Skydings new effluent system as well as the high stock traffic zone that had been cemented.

This work had assistance funding from the new Reef Rescue BMRG Water Quality Grants program the DBnB team has been implementing during the past 12 months.

Mr Skyring participated in a Soil & Nutrient Management Plan in mid-2014 and part of the day was devoted to demonstrating the practice changes he made as a result of the plan, the soil test

results and the recommendations stemming from the plan.

The group walked through the farm's pastures discussing pasture species, fertiliser practices and nutrients for plant production.

Senior extension officer (soil science) Ross Henry elaborated on the technical side of the soil discussion, showing the signs of potassium deficiency in clover, with everyone asking questions and commenting on their own practices and experiences.

The final part of the farm walk

was looking at the new feedpad and roof that Mr Skyring completed in December, 2014.

Mr Henry said the Skyring farm was excellent example of showing how and why improvements had been made and how hindsight has changed thoughts.

The day finished on a good note with everyone staying for a barbecue lunch and discussing many of the topics covered throughout the day.

Kandanga, Qld, dairyfarmer Garry Wheeler said he learnt a lot more by being out in the paddock.

Dairy turns its waste to an asset

IT IS said 'nature has no waste' but the same observation couldn't be applied to most dairies.

That's changing, one dairy at a time, as Lion partners its dairyfarmers by allocating funds through Landcare Australia to address energy consumption, nutrient management or biodiversity challenges.

Last year Lion allocated \$132,000 to the Lion Landcare Grant fund, for 13 initiatives around Australia and the reports are now coming in, demonstrating that going green can also put the budget in the black.

Kenilworth, Queensland, dairyfarmer Darrin Grevett received funding to help him concrete his main yard, including a dirt-floored feedpad.

That simple project has made a huge difference to the operation of the dairy.

The original yard was a management nightmare for Mr Grevett.

When it rained, the pad turned to mud, and manure ran off into surrounding paddocks.

Scraping manure from the yard took up to four hours, and the job was never done satisfactorily.

With support of about \$20,000 from Lion, Mr Grevett was able to concrete the yard and make a profound difference to his business.

"We've seen a lift in production," he said.

"I put this down to cow comfort and better access to brewer's grain (on the feedpad). They spend more time in the paddock."



Manure stockpile ready to spread at River Ridge Dairies.

Scraping the yard now takes 10 minutes, can be done in all weather and is 100% effective.

Mr Grevett is stockpiling the scraped manure into a compost pile that will be used to fertilise his pastures.

"What was once a waste product is now an input to the farm," he said.

The cleaner environment reduces the risk of mastitis, and therefore vet bills, and cows flow through the yards better because of the absence of mud.

A neighbouring dairyfarmer has already come to look at the Lion-Landcare funded work and is considering taking the same path himself.

Another Queensland dairyfarmer, Ramon Devere of River Ridge Dairies, Kureelpa, also received funding from

Lion to help increase the capacity of a planned silt trap at his yard.

The silt trap captures and recycles the larger amounts of nutrients in runoff manure and water from the concrete yards, laneways and feedpad area around the dairy.

Lion's head of agricultural procurement Murray Jeffrey said it was a great result to see the grants helping dairyfarmers achieve sustainability outcomes and cost savings.

Landcare Australia chief executive Tessa Jakszewicz said that innovative farming contributed to the health of the land while improving farmers' bottom lines.

"Importantly, these farmers are measuring the tangible improvements achieved by their projects, which can be shared with others," she said.

“I enjoyed the day as it was casual and on farm,” Mr Wheeler said.

“Farmers are practical people, so seeing something is worth a million words to us.

“The new effluent system that had been installed is something we have to do to upgrade our own system.

“What we’re looking at doing is similar to Rodney’s new system and it was useful to hear

what worked well and what didn’t.”

The DBnB team thanked Rodney and Sharon Skyring for hosting the day and Mr Skyring’s efforts to share his current farming practice.

If anyone is interested in either the Water Quality Grants program or a Soil & Nutrient Management Plan or any other queries, contact the DBnB team, phone (07) 3236 2955. **ND**



Farmers at the farm walk hear from senior extension officer (soil science) Ross Henry.

Manure spreader to give reef benefits

KEY POINTS

- Spreader allows best use of manure
- Helps restore organic matter
- Assistance through Reef Programme

By Brad Pfeffer

MALANDA, Qld, dairyfarmers Keith and Andrew Walmsley say their investment in a manure spreader through the Australian Government Reef Programme will deliver sizeable benefits for their farm, particularly for their fodder-growing country.

The Walmsleys milk about 180 cows on a little more than 200 hectares and use part of the farm for producing corn. This is then typically fed to the cows twice a day on a feedpad.

And while the Walmsleys say the system has served them well, the purchase of the manure spreader will help alleviate challenges that could arise in such a system. It will allow them to collect and reuse the manure that

has been accumulating at the feedpad and it will help them restore organic matter to their cropping country.

Senior extension officer for soil science Ross Henry said it also helped remove the risk of the manure entering waterways, thus delivering an environmental benefit as well.

“A project like this is a sustainable use of an existing nutrient source,” Mr Henry said. “Giving the farmer the ability to manage those nutrients over the farm reduces the stockpiles and reduces the risk.

“I have done some soil testing here, and due to the continuous cropping, their organic carbon levels were getting a bit low. This spreader allows them to increase the carbon levels in the soil.”

Keith Walmsley said the spreader cost about \$40,000 and they were able to secure about \$10,000 in assistance through the Reef Program.

“One of the main benefits is that we are not hosing the feedpad down like we used to into an effluent pond,” Mr Walms-



Malanda, Queensland, farmers Andrew and Keith Walmsley have partnered with the Australian Government Reef Program to invest in a manure spreader for their farm.

ley said. “We are picking it up in the yard, stockpiling it and then spreading it with the muck wagon. It also helps keeps things clean and avoids mastitis.”

Mr Henry said it was the type of project in which the northern

industry was keen to participate.

“Farmers are very willing to invest back into the industry and improve their practices so having a relatively small grant can be a catalyst for some big investments on farm,” he said. **ND**

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Good people to know.



NDFT1143459

BJD management review

KEY POINTS

- Review underway of BJD strategic plan
- Needs to look at impact on dairy
- Qld and WA have current advantage

By Brian Tessmann,
QDO president

THE review of the National Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) Strategic Plan, which is currently underway, must look at the experience of the past while examining future investment needs.

These considerations into managing the disease need to consider the future market potential and the past successes and failures in Queensland and across the whole subtropical dairy industry.

BJD is a wasting disease of cattle and like many diseases there are a number of different strains around the world.

It can result in significant losses of cattle and production in some herds. Many of our trading partners are free of the disease and have a range of restrictions on imports from infected regions.

There are also stories of links to human health conditions and any publicity of even a partially proven connection could prove

devastating for infected industries around the world.

While there has been considerable publicity and comment from the beef industry and beef producers during the past couple of years since an outbreak of the Bison strain of BJD was detected in central Queensland, there is little public understanding of the dairy industry's experience of BJD.

BJD is a disease that is mostly a problem in cooler temperate climates and also spreads more easily and is harder to eradicate in more intensive cattle management systems in those regions around the world.

The extensive cattle management systems in the tropics and subtropics have, with sensible management, a great advantage in preventing the occurrence of the disease and limiting the spread and eradication of any disease outbreaks from imported cattle.

If enough infected cattle are brought in and disease control management is poor then the disease can become commonplace.

This already appears to have happened in the subtropical dairy industry in northern NSW where the disease has been allowed to slowly become widespread.

Briefly, the management of BJD in South Eastern Australia sees the region divided into an infected zone and a management

zone, where in this zone the dairy industry is considered infected but the beef industry is not.

The rest of the country including Queensland and Western Australia has worked hard to maintain what amounts to, and should be, a free-of-the-disease status for all cattle.

It needs to be understood that the BJD that has been spread around so widely in southern states is the bovine strain of the disease, not the bison strain that lead to the problem in the northern beef industry.

I have not seen any evidence that the bison strain exists in southern states, so it seems unlikely to me that that particular outbreak came from there.

Still, there have been a number of outbreaks of the southern bovine strain of BJD in Queensland during the past few decades, almost all of which were detected in the cattle imported from the southern states.

Some of these outbreaks were from illegal movements and some others were from a breakdown in the diligence of the cattle movement system. In past years all of these outbreaks have been successfully eradicated.

And while I am told by government that there are again a small number of dairy herds in the state at present that have been

infected by imported cattle we should be able to clean up these outbreaks as well by using similar management to that which has occurred in the past.

Unfortunately, except for the most recent group of outbreaks, the BJD impacts in dairy were not supported in a financial way such as the assistance currently given to beef producers since the outbreak of the bison strain of the disease.

Clearly, thanks to a combination of climate and production systems, the Queensland dairy and beef industries have an ability to steal a march on some southern states where the bovine strain of BJD is common and widespread.

Producers and industry in southern states would love states like Queensland to give up this advantage by dropping restrictions and let BJD become fairly commonplace, and therefore get into the BJD infected pool with them.

Alongside this, industry and government should realise we need realistic financial assistance programs for producers, whether dairy or beef, where they are drawn into the issue through no fault of their own. So there will be plenty for Animal Health Australia to consider if it is to be fair to all states in this review. **ND**

What is Bovine Johne's Disease?

BOVINE Johne's disease (BJD) is a chronic, incurable disease of adult cattle caused by a hardy, slow-growing bacterium called *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*. Cattle usually only become infected as calves less than 12 months of age.

Generally no symptoms are seen until the animals are at least four years old. When clinical signs do occur they include a loss of milk production and body weight over several weeks, followed by persistent diar-

rhoea that is unresponsive to treatment.

The animal will then waste away over weeks to months until it eventually dies. The presence of the disease in a herd is notifiable to the State Government, and movement restrictions may be placed on cattle from affected herds in some States.

Although live animals can be tested for BJD, infection is difficult to detect reliably in all animals in early stages. For example, a typical 200-cow dairy herd infected

with BJD could expect to see only a handful of clinical cases each year.

If the herd was blood tested, about 2% (four of the 200 animals) may be detected. However, due to the low sensitivity of the blood test there are likely to be about 10% (20 animals) infected with BJD.

National Dairy BJD Assurance Score

The National Dairy BJD Assurance Score is a voluntary, risk-based trading system, based on self as-

essment, for farmers to better manage the risk of BJD. Using the existing programs, the Dairy Score ranks the assurance measures, on a 0 to 10 scale, of cattle being infected with BJD. The 10-point scale recognises the benefits of good BJD practices: the higher the score, the lower the risk.

Full details of the Dairy Score are available from the website, <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/bjd>.

Information courtesy of Dairy Australia

April 14-16: Gympie Show, Qld
Contact: Gympie Show Society,
 Website: <www.gympieshow.com.au>
 Phone: (07) 5482 1721

May 21: Rural Discovery Day
Brisbane RNA Showgrounds
 Contact: Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation
 Phone: (07) 3236 2955

May 26-68: Irrigation Australia Regional Conference
Penrith, NSW
 Contact: Irrigation Australia
 Phone: (02) 8335 4000
 Fax: (02) 8335 4099
 Email: <info@irrigation.org.au>
 Website: <www.irrigation.org.au/>

May TBC: Minimum Till Planter farm visit
Blackwoods Farm, Gympie, Qld
 Contact: Sally Whatman, mobile 0488 669 965

June 1: World Milk Day
 Website: <http://www.fao.org/economic/est/est-commodities/dairy/school-milk/15th-world-milk-day/en/>

June 2-4: Farmfest
Toowoomba, Qld
 Contact: Rural Press Events
 Phone: (02) 6768 5800. Fax: (02) 6768 5811
 Email: <farmfest@ruralpress.com>
 Website: <www.farmonline.com.au/events/farmfest>

June 18-20: Primex
Casino, NSW

Contact: Rural Press Events
 Phone: (02) 6768 5800
 Email: <primex@fairfaxmedia.com.au>
 Website: <www.primex.net.au>

June 17-18: 2015 Dairy Research Foundation Symposium
Camden, NSW
 Contact: EPP Events
 Email: <donna@eppevents.com.au>
 Phone: 1800 177 636

June TBC: Nitrogen fertiliser trial results
Gympie, Qld
 Contact: Ross Henry, mobile 0459 989 102

Aug 7-16: Ekka, RNA Showgrounds
Bowen Hills, Brisbane
 Contact: RNA
 Phone: (07) 3852 3900. Fax: (07) 3257 1428
 Email: <enquiries@ekka.com.au>
 Website: <www.ekka.com.au>

Aug 28: Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation/Dairy Industry Association of Australia conference
 SurfAir — Marcoola, Sunshine Coast, Qld
 Contact: Kylie Dennis
 Phone: (07) 3236 2955,
 Email: kylie@dairypage.com.au

DIARY DATES

To have an event included in the diary dates, send information to Carlene and Alastair Dowie
 Phone/fax: (03) 5464 1542
 Email: <alastair.dowie@fairfaxmedia.com.au>
 or submit to website <www.dairyinfo.biz>



Getting on top of hoof health

Caring for your herd's hooves and legs is part of the daily health check. Keeping an eye on feet not only saves a cow from pain, it makes financial sense.

Dairy Australia calculates each lame cow can cost up to \$600 to \$700/year through lost milk production, lower fertility, an increased risk of culling and actual treatment costs.

About 80%-90% of lameness occurs in the feet; most commonly in hind feet.

You can restrain a cow in a crush or rotary bail or even on the platform in a herringbone dairy.

If you suspect lameness, examine the hoof using an examination kit comprising:

- a soft rope for tying the leg;
- hoof testers;
- a sharp hoof knife (double-sided) protected with a pouch;
- sharp hoof trimmers; and
- sharpening tools.

Examine the foot, looking for:

- sole injuries;
- white line disease;
- foot rot, or
- interdigital cracks.

The more stable and comfortable a cow feels, the quieter she will stand. Having a non-slip surface and/or straps to support the weight of the cow will assist.

Talk to your vet about treatments like trimming and paring, blocks, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories/painkillers and rest. If more than 7% of the herd is affected by lameness, problems will be identifiable which should be worked on with advice from your vet.

Visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au for suggestions on ways to help restore hoof health in your herd.

This is one of the many examples of the dairy service levy at work locally. Farmers receive a benefit of \$3 for every \$1 invested by Dairy Australia on their behalf. For more information on this and other levy investments visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

TAKE A BREAK AND SEE A KEY EVENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN FARMING CALENDAR



PRIMEX

**RICHMOND VALLEY EVENTS CENTRE
BRUXNER HIGHWAY, CASINO NSW**

**THURSDAY
JUNE 18**

**FRIDAY
JUNE 19**

**SATURDAY
JUNE 20**

2015

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