

## Project 20:20 – Leading dairy farmers showcased to grow the NSW Dairy Industry

An innovative new project is helping dairy farmers across New South Wales adapt their businesses for a more profitable future.

*Grow the NSW Dairy Industry: Project 20:20 Pathways to Change* is a collaboration between Dairy NSW, Subtropical Dairy, Dairy Australia and the NSW Department of Primary Industries and aims to build confidence and drive growth within the NSW Dairy industry. Together with milk processors and other commercial providers who consult and advise dairy farmers, *Project 20:20* will provide a range of support services which aid farmers to develop customised farm business management plans to understand and monitor their individual business performance over time.

The project's focus is to showcase best practice farms across the state and highlight their management feedbase, people, business, natural resource management and herd performance.

Five geographically spread dairy farms were nominated by industry to become feature farms. The farming systems vary from totally mixed ration housed animals to robotics, to family run and operated systems. These businesses demonstrate a sound knowledge of their cost of production and a willingness to sustain, grow or improve business and farm efficiencies.

The five farms are:

- Anthony and Jillian Wilson, Risk NSW via Kyogle. The Wilson's have converted their dairy to an automatic milking system by installing three robots. Their decision was based on research, planning and a drive to stay at the front of technical adoption in the industry. To help them manage their cost of production, they participate in the *Dairy Farm Monitor Project*.
- Tim and Julie Bale, Stewarts River NSW. The Bale's are the driving force behind Woolworths brand "Farmer's Own". Tim felt that his milk was worth more than what processors were offering, so he formed a collective bargaining group and brokered a deal to supply directly to Woolworths – securing the profitability of their farm. To help manage their farm staff, they utilise the *People in Dairy* website resources and implement the *Feeding Pastures for Profit* grazing principles.
- Colin and Erina Thompson, Cowra NSW. The Thompsons' run a housed animal and totally mixed ration dairy operation. The couple strive to run an efficient dairy business with a focus on cow comfort and health and an eye to continual improvement of their farming system. Their dairy development story is one of significant change and success albeit through industry challenges. They advocate the *Cups On, Cups Off* program for all staff to maintain herd health.
- Grant and Jane Sherborne, Burrawang NSW. The Sherborne's are a family-owned dairy farm business. The couple are firm believers in benchmarking to check their business margin. They use this data to reflect on how their business decisions impacted on production and

profit. The Sherborne family are advocates for the *Cows Create Careers* programme to encourage and educate students about the dairy industry and career opportunities.

- Neville and Ruth Kydd, Finley NSW. The Kydd's dairy farm business journey is one of growth and cost control. The couple believes that fodder price is a great risk in the dairy industry and they mitigate this risk by storing at least 12 months' worth of feed on-farm. For example, before purchasing off-farm feed they analyse whether it would be more profitable to reduce the milking herd. The couple produce budgets every year by taking into account the milk price and then determining their herd number to result in the greatest return. To assist them to benchmark, they utilise *DairyBase*.

A detailed online profile has been released on each of the featured farms. The profiles are in the form of easily accessible and interactive online books that detail how the adoption of best practices across their whole farm has improved productivity and profitability. The farms share their individual farming stories, recapping how they overcome problems, adapt to change and make decisions.

Roxanne Cooley, Project Manager and Regional Manager of Dairy NSW said that, "while building confidence is complex, ultimately confidence will be built by farmers feeling in control of their businesses. The industry will be invited to open days at each farm over the next six months and the farms will participate in a panel discussion at the NSW Dairy Industry Forum on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July at the Rydges in Port Macquarie, alongside the 2017 Dairy Research Foundation Symposium."

For more information on *Project 20:20* or to view the recently published feature farm profiles please visit <http://www.dairynsw.com.au/Projects/Project2020.aspx> or call Jess Micallef on 0428 472 983.