



GARDINER FOUNDATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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LEADING THE RECOVERY IN NORTHERN VICTORIA – FAST TRACKING INNOVATION IN DAIRY IRRIGATION

A group of 55 dairy irrigators, researchers and funding bodies recently at DPI's Tatura Centre to identify projects that might fast track recovery of milk production in Northern Victoria. The Workshop was developed and delivered by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in collaboration with Murray Dairy, and funded by the Gardiner Foundation.

Over the last 10 years, the Murray Dairy region has experienced extended drought, record temperatures and significant reductions in irrigation water allocation. The Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) has seen billions of dollars worth of irrigation delivery system upgrades including channel leakage reduction, improved flow measurement and control, reduced ordering times, system contraction back to spine and fewer delivery points.

Farmers have adapted by changing their pasture type, feed mix strategies, buying and selling water and introducing on-farm irrigation control technologies. But new conditions require new information.

To help the irrigated dairy industry move forward the Gardiner Foundation has funded DPI to develop a business case of the irrigation research, development and extension needs for the region.

The first step was the Workshop held in Tatura to bring stakeholders together to focus on identifying gaps in the current portfolio of irrigation projects and develop these into a prospectus for investors in 2011 rounds of research, development and extension funding.

The Workshop identified 15 opportunities. High on the list of priorities were:

- A greater uptake and capability by dairy farmers in farm business management;
- The performance, management and integration of forages under conditions of variable water supply; and
- Increased understanding of high flow delivery systems

These priority issues will be developed into a series of funding applications to a range of investors.

In April 2010 the Gardiner Foundation Board met in Echuca and at a Workshop facilitated by Murray Dairy, discussed priorities for funding with a range of dairy industry stakeholders. Since then Gardiner has continued to be the principal cash investor in Murray Dairy's *Business Networks* and in the initial round of *Focus Farms* in Northern Victoria. The Foundation has also launched a new project to address issues specific to the irrigated dairy industry in the Murray Dairy region, such as business expansion, transition and underutilised resources. The project will also look at facilitating the potential for cluster farms to form.

These investments are part of \$4.7 million of funding allocated by Gardiner in its 10 years of operation to projects specific to the Northern Victorian Irrigated Dairy region.

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Workshop to define irrigation RD&E priorities for the Murray Dairy Region, at DPI's Tatura Centre.