Subtropical Dairy

Annual Report 2001-2002

Malanda

Kempsey

Subtropical Dairy Program Ltd

Annual Report 2001-2002

Dairy Research and Development Corporation

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Technical Advisory Group

Lyle Daniel, Laurie Dunne, David Gramshaw, Philip Chamberlain
Tom Cowan, Greg Nunn, Kate Roberts

Landcare Conference

At the 2002 Queensland Landcare Conference in Townsville were Ken Stallman, chair of the Landcare and Catchment Management Council with Subtropical Dairy program manager Philip Chamberlain.

Dairying for Tomorrow

Subtropical Dairy chair Shane Gittins with Queensland Primary Industries Minister Henry Palaszczuk who launched the Dairying for Tomorrow program in Brisbane in April 2002.

Drought another challenge for farmers

Chairman's Review

Shane Gittins

The dairy industry has continued to change during the year with many challenges for farmers as well as across the broader industry.

Weather conditions in our Subtropical area have only continued to worsen during the year with the region facing one of the worst droughts in 50 years. The combination of severe drought plus widespread adverse conditions across Australia has increased the price of inputs considerably, coupled with a shortage of supply.

Fortunately we have seen an increase in the price for milk at farm gate. But even with the higher price, we have many farmers in a position of negative return. Having worked very hard to regain farmer confidence in the industry and keeping farmer's attitude positive in the last 12 months, it is disappointing that the weather conditions can deal such a devastating blow.

In the last year we have seen a drop in total regional milk supply with reducing farmer members. Yet at the same time we have, on average, seen an increase in individual farm milk supply across the year. This is testimony to the continuing increase in skills and professionalism of our farming sector and continued support from all extension providers.

It is my belief that Subtropical Dairy has played a significant role in the up skilling of our farmers across many areas of expertise with our range of very relevant projects and support to the development of information and its dissemination.

The Subtropical Dairy team has been working through many changes in the last year and will into the coming year, ensuring our farmers needs are being met and ensuring we all have the skills to meet the future in store for us. Our current operating budget is being reduced on an annual basis, putting pressure on the prioritisation of proposals for projects. It is imperative that we ensure that projects are outcome focused and not just project oriented. Our value adding in bringing in outside funds is still very impressive with approximately 3 dollars raised for each dollar that we put in. We will continue our commitment to projects that will cater for the needs of those farmers who will be dairying into the future and to do this we will have to work harder and become more focused on sourcing outside funds.

The National Dairy Industry is continuing the process of restructuring with the formation of Dairy Australia, most likely to start on July 1, 2003. This will impact on the way Subtropical Dairy operates in the future and we have been working toward an outcome that will give farmers in our region a voice.

The very basic benefit of Regional Development Programs was questioned in the ADIC RD&E review, released during the year. A working group was formed and work proceeded to not only review the programs but to see if there may be a better model for farmer involvement.

A number of recommendations have come from this working group and a document has been released to the industry for comment. It is seen that national priority setting for RD&E needs to be strengthened with the State and National Dairy Farmer Organisations working a lot closer with groups such as Subtropical Dairy to achieve this.

Regional Development Programs are seen to add value to the industry across Australia but will need to work from a different funding base and question their responsibility and accountability. The working group believes the RDP's primary objective should be to enhance the economic and environmental well being of the dairy industry through effective research, development and extension. I believe our recent review and rewriting of our strategic plan will continue to move us towards this objective.

The Subtropical Dairy team have worked together well over the last 12 months and I would like to thank you all for making this a very successful year. A special thank you to Philip Chamberlain for his commitment and expertise in making sure things happen.

Farmer input to research

The Subtropical Dairy Program was established as an incorporated body in 1995, superseding the Northern Dairy Group. It is one of eight groups across Australia dairying areas under the umbrella of the Dairy Research and Development Corporation. The regional structure was set up to provide a mechanism for dairy farmers to have a strong involvement in identifying, selecting and managing research, development and extension activities.

Australia's sub tropical dairy region extends from Kempsey in NSW to the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland. This region has a variety of environmental, climatic and production conditions which pose some unique challenges to dairy farming.

Focus on a sustainable dairy future

Program Manager

Philip Chamberlain

Post deregulation has meant different things for different people. For Subtropical Dairy, it has meant focusing on processes and projects that are going to address issues that will assist dairy farmers to generate sustainable businesses in the future.

Over the past twelve months, a real effort has been made to ensure that sustainability has underpinned our thinking, and the following are some of the outcomes of this;

A new Strategic plan was developed earlier in the year, containing a number of changes that reflect this new focus. Goals have been set in the areas of farm productivity, natural resource management and animal welfare targets as well as the training levels of farm owners/operators, managers and workers. All new projects will be examined in the light of how they will improve productivity and sustainability.

Dairying Better n Better has been completed and a number of regional launches took place across the region. This project was developed in response to a call from farmers across the region to define Best Management Practice in the areas of water use, fertiliser use, effluent management and soil health. Farmers now have a practical tool to help them overcome every day issues with respect to management of their natural resources.

In April 2002, the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk launched Subtropical Dairy's Regional Action Plan. This industry-owned document describes the important NRM issues currently facing the industry and defines the strategic action required to overcome them. This document demonstrates to the community that the industry intends to remain viable in an economic and environmental sense.

One outcome from this plan has been the development of two new on-ground sustainability focused projects. These projects will describe NRM targets that farmers need to aim for as well as promote the uptake of the better management practices developed. The Subtropical Dairy region leads Australia in the area of on-ground work in this area.

Subtropical Dairy was represented at the Landcare Conference in Townsville in July 2002, and a presentation highlighted the proactive approach of the northern dairy industry in the area of environmental sustainability.

We are aware of the lack of coordination that exists in the NRM project arena, and in conjunction with the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, State Government Departments and the DRDC, we are endeavouring to procure funding for a dedicated person who will be able to monitor all aspects of NRM and coordinate funding across all stakeholders.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation – Dairy Farm Management & Welfare Guidelines have recently been launched and have been successful in developing a strong relationship between the dairy industry and the public sector, including the RSPCA, and a better understanding of perceived welfare issues on-farm.

Subtropical Dairy is acutely aware of the threat that ticks and chemical residues pose to the future industry and is actively pursuing a number of tick & buffalo control projects that aim to achieve adequate levels of control with minimal chemical use.

All these areas of activity will assist to develop an industry that will be viable for the next generations; that is our aim.

Performance review conducted

A performance review of Subtropical Dairy was carried out during 2002 by consultant Kate Roberts.

It was based on a set of objectives developed by the monitoring and evaluation sub-committee.

The review focused on four different levels.

Experience of the SRTs.

Members were interviewed about their role, and the benefits of their involvement and how concerns of their dairy community were collected and addressed.

The main finding was that the greatest benefits came from access to new ideas, information and help when needed.

Management Committee

Members collected data about the operation of the Committee, the content they deal with and issues relating to SRTs. Monitoring of, and reporting on, the processes used has made meetings run more efficiently.

Dairy community survey

The dairy community finds that Subtropical Dairy is most effective in developing projects that reflect industry needs. Farmers still want research on pastures and feed sources although research in the areas of price security, business and herd health are also popular.

Value of the Annual Forum

The main value of the Annual Forums is the time spent by SRT members talking to each other and reconnecting with the Management Committee. It is also seen as an appropriate time and place to talk about broader industry issues. Farm visits are also seen as an important.

NSW Mid North Coast
Chairman
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Regional team reports

Pasture herb gaining acceptance

The herb tonic plantain has the subject of trials and is gaining farmer acceptance. It has performed well during the drought. Tonic plantain is suited to no till farming. Annual rye grasses are sod seeded into the existing pasture. The first trials are now more than four years old and the tonic plantain seeds and thickens up and is frost tolerant.

Benchmarking. A project to collect and evaluate financial figures to assist in the farm management involves 23 farms involved. This data is amalgamated with regional and state figures to give a comparative performance.

High Phosphorus Demonstration Farms at Grafton, Dorrigo, Bellingen and Bowraville have contributed three years data. A number of field days / farm walks have been held over this time.

Dairying Better and Better. Topics covered by groups at Dorrigo, Bellingen and Grafton have included fertilizers and soil fertility, soil testing, herd reproduction assessment and effluent disposal and use. Effluent pit moulds have been in demand with a waiting list.

Dairywise Newsletter The newsletter, started out as a SRT initiative, comes out 6 times a year and carries articles that help inform dairy farmers. It is posted to farmers in the region.

The SRT has also been involved in a number of national projects including Countdown Downunder, In Calf, Cow Time and a new evaluation of milk protein.

NSW North Coast
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Regional team reports

Six new projects approved

During the year, six projects were approved in the NSW North Coast region.

1. Publishing of more local farmer success stories.
2. Funding approval for CI & I workshop.
3. A bus trip to Mutdapilly to look at the farmlet trial.
4. Support for study tour to New Zealand.
5. A maize grain processing trial and the effect on production with particle size of crushed grain.
6. The final report on grain based supplements.

Two project applications were rejected – a molasses trial (funded externally) and a comparison of prairie grass versus rye for butterfat. A dung beetle trial started in mid October. Our benchmarking project has been incorporated into NSW Agriculture and Norco Co-operative activities based on the Dairy Accounting Scheme.

Members have been heavily involved with Sergio Tiexeira looking at participatory approaches to identify dairy industry needs in RD & E.

Four meetings were held during the year. The reduction in activity was attributed to farmers being busier with increasing cow numbers and a dry year.

Regional team reports

Darling Downs
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Funding for feed analysis project

The Darling Downs Team has sought funding for several new projects and continues to support a number of on-going programs.

Feed Analysis

Funding approval has been received to analyse various feeds and forages. Dr Tom Cowan will coordinate similar projects across the State. He will review proposals and identify gaps in the current feed analysis database to avoid duplication.

Study Tour or bursary

A funding application has been made to support an annual study tour either locally or overseas. This would assist an applicant to study specific aspects relating to the dairying industry that will be applicable locally.

Cider Vinegar

While no concrete proposal has been made for funding for an official project on the effect of using cider vinegar for mastitis control, Dr Lyle Daniel of Queensland University is making preliminary literature searches into this subject. It is hoped that some preliminary trials may also be in place at the University farm.

Dung Beetles

Our group continues to support a dung beetle project. Discussion groups have been held in some areas of the Darling Downs. It is hoped that more of these can be held over the warmer months for farmers to attend and identify dung beetles found on their properties.

Milk Protein Trial

Support continued for a milk protein trial has high farmer interest. While the on-farm monitoring part of this project has now been completed, data analysis is continuing.

Soil Restoration Project

This project is nearing completion and is close to the extension stage. Progress reports are received on its operation.

Regional team reports

Burnett
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Mutdapilly visit a highlight

The Burnett SRT had an informative visit to the Mutdapilly Research Station to understand and learn from the Farmlet Project established there. Considerable time was spent viewing the various paddocks and setup of each farmlet. A return visit in 12 months was suggested.

At a meeting in early February 2002, the Burnett SRT hosted 2 speakers. Rob Chataway from Mutdapilly spoke on the dairy farms soils restoration project and Graeme Elphinstone presented an overview of the dung beetle projects. Graeme offered to do a series of dung beetle workshops in our area which took place in March, April and May at Kingaroy, Murgon, and Mundubbera.

Annual Forum at Wondai.

The team hosted the Subtropical Dairy annual forum. Peter Hetherington chaired the organising committee with Brian Tessman and Andrew Zenner contributing.

Group reformed

The Burnett group was reformed during the year with a new committee. Brian Tessman was thanked for his time as chairman. The first meeting had questions and points for discussion on issues including: the efficacy of many soil amendment products, potential milk production and water usage efficacy of grain sorghum vs corn vs forage sorghum, dung beetles, fertiliser usage, use of Leucaena in the Burnett, and maximizing forage yields of various cropping systems, such as corn-corn vs corn-barley vs lab-lab-barley.

South East Qld
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Regional team reports

Better prices spark competition

After yet another drought season it is hard to be optimistic in the light of the gloomy long term weather predictions. Without a period of substantial general rain in the coming months many farmers will face a difficult future. On a more positive note, with improved prices the four processors all at one time or another have actively engaged in the poaching of farmers.

A number of R&D projects were completed with others still in progress.

Crowsfoot in pastures.

This project investigates practices to reduce crowsfoot in summer pasture. A report on chemical control showed the cost and withholding periods made chemical control impractical. We hope to pursue further research into management practices of planting rye that could impact on crowsfoot dominance.

Chicken litter

This project was to bring together the current knowledge of the prevention of botulism and other diseases when using this product. Further incidents of botulism in the Beaudesert area highlighted the importance of this project.

Mastitis in heifers

This project is designed to investigate the incidence of mastitis in heifers prior to calving. Since its inception and acceptance by management we have had discussions with Joanne Platell who is doing her masters thesis on this subject. Joanne has been working with Lyle Daniel on this project.

By-products investigation

A project currently underway will investigate the effect of storage on by-product nutrient level. As the use of alternate animal feeds increases, we need to have reliable information for the development of feed plans.

Employment Workshop

With many farms expanding post-dereguation, this often requires employment of labour for the first time. A workshop was planned to cover the basics as well as exploring the more complex aspect of employer employee relationship.

How long should a cow milk?

This proposed project will explore herd recording data to ascertain a clearer picture on the effect of getting a cow back in calf.

Central Qld
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Regional team reports

Water use efficiency field days

A number of activities have been undertaken in Central Queensland over the past 12 months. These include

Water use efficiency

Farmers were encouraged to apply for available government grants. Local issues followed up included the use of fertigation and water efficiency audits with field days on special topics such as pump maintenance.

Nitrogen requirements of ryegrass

Because of a poor ryegrass season it was decided to conduct a trial over autumn/winter 2003 to correlate meter readings with results obtained through traditional sampling and testing methods.

Dairying Better' N' Better

Workshops were associated with launch of the best practice CD.

Protein extension project.

An initial investigation and development of project proposal has been made.

Local newsletter

The first edition of a local CQ newsletter was produced January 2002.

Regional team reports

North Qld
Chairman
Des O'Connor
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Secretary
Ian Stewart
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Grow Malanda initiative develops

Futuring workshops funded last year have progressed to a second stage under the banner of GROW MALANDA. **Grow**, symbolising a growing healthy industry, and **Malanda**, our regional brand name and location.

A Grow Malanda newsletter is produced. The newsletter, which is published quarterly, provides up to date, relevant information for farmers. Three newsletters have been distributed to date and have been very well received. Field days have been held covering rye grass management and water use efficiency.

The Grow Malanda milk barometer, which sets production targets for the short and medium term will soon be erected to encourage production awareness in the community.

Neospora project

Abortion causes in Tableland herds have been investigated since the issue was brought to light during the national In-Calf project. Another milestone report has been received and we hope to continue this project.

Paspalum spray

Preliminary spray work proved disappointing. Pre-emergent work is on hold until there is rain.

Proposed projects

- Regional conception rates in relation to temperature.
- Banana waste is being trialed and may require some support.

New team members

Two new farmers joined the team during the year, Glenn Dury and Paul Eddelstein. Ross Walker is the new DPI representative and Howard Smith represents Dairy Farmers.

Project Reports

Natural Resource Management
Technical Coordinator
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Priority Issues

- Water and fertiliser use efficiency
- Soil fertility maintenance
- Effluent management
- Plant and animal pest control
- Off-farm environmental impacts
- Image of farm practices

Rebuilding Cropping Soils

The project began in 1996 to assess the impacts of zero tillage, extra nitrogen fertiliser, more frequent cropping, feedlot manure, pastures and annual legumes on soil fertility, production and soil erosion within annual forage cropping systems.

- **Zero till** gave no production advantage in fallowed systems, but it is less labour intensive and more flexible than conventional tillage.
- **Nitrogen fertiliser** applied at levels > 50 kg N/ha/crop was beneficial for raising plant protein content at the 2nd and 3rd grazing, and for increasing production in wetter years.
- **Double cropping** was successful in improving production in 2 out of 6 years; in these years it also gave extra benefits in protecting soil from erosion and contributing residue to the soil organic matter pool.

- **Feedlot manure** gave production, soil organic matter and available soil nitrogen benefits for at least three years after application.
- **Annual legumes** reduced reliance on nitrogen fertiliser, with fallowed lablab-forage sorghum rotations proving positive.
- **Forage sorghum** was the cropping option making the best contribution to soil organic matter; well-fertilised Rhodes grass pastures also built soil organic matter.
- **Lucerne** based pastures produced high quality forage with annual production being similar to fallowed oat crops.

Dairying Better 'n Better

Commenced in 1999 and recently completed, the project focused on improved irrigation, soil, fertiliser and effluent management for gaining dual environmental and production benefits. Through a broad participatory process involving farmers, dairy advisers and technical specialists, the project mainly aimed to define better management practices, develop 'farmer-friendly' decision support information and promote better practice within the industry.

Over the past year the Dairying Better 'n Better software CD was completed and farmer involvement occurred through continuing Dairy Improvement Group activities and CD Demonstration and follow-up workshops.

The CD includes an information manual based on better practices that can benefit farm productivity, profit and the environment.

Almost 250 subtropical farmers participated in the project's activities during its 3 year term, and recent surveys show that 12% of industry farmers have changed or are planning to change management practices as a result of their involvement in the project.

Two booklets have also been published titled "*Subtropical Dairying Better Practices Checklist*" and "*Successful Minimum Tillage on Subtropical Dairy Farms*". The *CD and Better Practices Checklist* booklet can be obtained from QDPI or NSW Agriculture.

Water Use Efficiency

Waterwise (NSW) and *Irrigation for Profit (Queensland)* continue to contribute to the improvement of irrigation management and water use efficiency.

Although not directly supported by SDP, there has been close collaboration between these two projects and *Dairying Better 'n Better*. Development of the irrigation section of the *Dairying Better 'n Better* CD involved all three projects to ensure technical support information for irrigation practice was soundly based and consistent.

During 2001/02 the *Irrigation for Profit* project involved 68% of Queensland dairy and lucerne irrigators in field days, workshops and farm irrigation system checks. Some 38% of irrigators also used the project's Financial Incentives Scheme.

Sustaining Natural Resources

This partnership project, involving DRDC and the National Land and Water Audit, Australian Dairy Farmers Federation and Australian Dairy Products Federation, has now reached a stage where Regional Development Program Action Plans for natural resource management (NRM) are in place.

The Subtropical Dairy Action Plan is being implemented following a call, in early 2002, for expressions of interest for developing and securing relevant projects and funding. The main objectives are to:

- Define and raise awareness of farm and catchment scale NRM targets
- Improve industry links with regional and catchment NRM initiatives
- Increase farmer ownership and adoption of better NRM practices.
- Improve existing support information and decision tools.
- Encourage integrated whole-farm management planning.

Project Reports

Feed Systems Management
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Dairy farming systems

A comprehensive farmlet experiment was established at Mutdapilly in September 2001 to investigate production, water use efficiency, sustainability, economic and social aspects of options for dairy farmers in intensifying production. These options range from an extensive system based on raingrown tropical grass, fertiliser and concentrate through various systems of limited and high irrigation water availability using either pastures or crops, to a full feedlot based on concentrate, lucerne and maize silage. All the systems share the same economic goals of a 10% return on assets and 600,000 L per labour unit.
The project web page can be found at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/m5.

Warm season legumes

Legumes which were promising in an earlier project – Arachis pintoi, A.glabrata, and Shaw creeping vigna -- are being followed through in a new project. This project will document the management of these legumes in paddocks on dairy farms and measure their contribution to farm productivity. Paddocks with established stands of the legumes will be chosen from the Atherton Tableland to northern New South Wales.
At the same time a farmlet experiment was established on Kairi Research Station will be conducted on Kairi Research Station during winter 2002, for trials to begin during the coming summer.

Enhancing forage use

The final report for this project has now been submitted. The study followed 8 farms, four coastal and four in the West Moreton, for 2 years, documenting pasture and crop growth, feeding strategies and milk production.
The major areas for northern producers to increase efficiency are:

- Increase and expand fertiliser use and levels.
- Reduce the number of forage components to reduce labour demands
- Formulate rations to reduce nutrient wastage.
- Increase concentrate levels to 30-40% of the diet
- Batch calve the cows

Protein content of milk

There are marked seasonal variations in protein content of milk on northern dairy farms, and often large differences between farms. Twelve farms were selected as case studies, 6 with consistently high milk protein levels and 6 with low levels. Of the variables investigated body condition was most closely related to milk protein content. Month of calving was also important.
Another SDP sponsored project looked at the effects of feeding on the processability of milk for cheese. Initial investigations showed milk protein was closely related to yield of cheese from milk, and the marked seasonal variation in yield. The cheese types being tested are mozzarella and cheddar. Further testing is now being done on the different feeding systems in operation at Mutdapilly. A controlled experiment will be done in spring 2002 to test the potential of nutrition to alter the ratios of the 4 main proteins in casein,

Using feedpads in summer

In the time between morning and afternoon milking cows can be offered a high quality diet while remaining under shade and close to the dairy. The effects of bringing cows in during the heat of the day, and either simply cooling them or cooling them and providing silage were compared at Wollongbar research Institute. The cows in the paddock had access to tree shade. There was no benefit to just bringing them in and cooling them, but there was a benefit to providing silage in addition to cooling. At Mutdapilly research station it was found that a 16% protein level in the total diet was adequate, even though the components of the diet are fed at different times of the day. In this experiment cows grazed Rhodes grass pastures during the night, and received their mix of silage, protein meal and grain on a feedpad during the day.

Perennial ryegrass trials

A program has been conducted from 1997 to 2002 to evaluate perennial grasses from commercial seed companies using a series of row and sward sowings at Gatton Research Station. As well as ryegrass, this program evaluated tall fescue, phalaris and Bromus cultivars.
The best breeders' lines of ryegrass have achieved better yields and are more persistent than Dobson, the standard ryegrass for the subtropics. Some new experimental material has demonstrated superiority.
In another major project a range of new fescue cultivars was evaluated for yield and quality. The higher yielding cultivars were more persistent and growth rates continued for longer.

Project Reports

Whole Farm Management
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DairyPro Upgraded

DairyPro, a computer program for checking farm performance against industry benchmarks and the likely benefits of any planned changes to an enterprise, was first released in about mid-2000. The program has subsequently been upgraded to improve its user-friendliness and ability to handle different milk pricing systems. Enterprise performance benchmarks have also been revised from regional industry 'average' to 'high performance', so as to help address the need now for greater enterprise efficiencies.
The revised product includes an administration package to make it easier to sell, to service on-line through the internet, and to upgrade on a regular basis. A purchase price of $50 and upgrading of the product's knowledge base every 6 months has been recommended. DairyPro 2 is also incorporated in the Dairying Better 'n Better CD.
Extension and promotion of the revised DairyPro is expected to be through a low key launch with media releases, a train the trainer phase with QDPI and NSW Ag extension staff and use in other current projects, like the Mutdapilly Farmlet project.

Milk production systems

This project uses a three step process to gain acceptance and use of business principles by milk producers and their advisers. During the year attention has focused on training of advisers and farmers with a strong interest. During the next two years interest will move to training and communicating with farmers. A formal communication plan has been prepared by consultants, and is being used as the basis for communication with industry. This report highlighted some issues which are important in our communication. Some of these were,

- Consistent acknowledgment of the need for business skills training for dairy farmers
- Information overload, market clutter and confusion about training products amongst dairy farmers.

On the basis of the plan, the farming community is being approached as two groups - **Progressive Farmers**, motivated by profit and competent in the use of financial analysis. These tend to be younger people, with a higher level of debt, active in industry events, and with a longer term view.
Steady State Farmers, are those driven by production issues, use production measures as indicator of business health, lack confidence, and have lifestyle/standard of living objectives.
Details of the curriculum are being developed sequentially. Within each workshop the management team and technical consultants choose a number of key topics, and the course is structured around these. For each topic the process of delivery is a short introduction to the concept, a practical example, a worksheet for participants to work through in the regional groups, and a plenary session for comparison and comment. A generic case study, Bob and Betty's farm, is being used throughout the workshops in the worksheets and discussion. A specific farm in each region is being used by the participants to develop a real case study. This exercise is done in regional teams between workshops.

The first State workshops have now been held in Queensland and New South Wales. Attendees were employees of State Governments and Milk Processors, consultants to farmers and farmers. Twenty and thirty people attended in Queensland and New South Wales respectively. The workshops were well received, and evaluation scores were high. Substantial feedback was also received after the workshops. What worked well:

- Strong business content
- Worksheets and practical examples
- Link to QDAS
- Content diagram

Greg Nunn has retired from his position as technical coordinator and has been replaced by consultant Rick Humphreys.

Project Reports

Animal Management
Technical Coordinator
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Regional support for major national animal projects

The major projects in Animal Management that continue to be supported by SDP are also national DRDC projects. These are Countdown Downunder, In Calf and the national Lameness Project. These are largely survey and extension projects and successful promotion and extension meetings have been held in the SDP area in the past year, although serious consideration should be given to changing extension methodology to suit local conditions.
Continuous monitoring of the success and effectiveness of these programs is, and will be, required in the future.

Tick project held up

It is disappointing that the major project on genetic resistance of Bos taurus dairy cattle to ticks and buffalo fly" has still not commenced due to problems with intellectual property rights. From the point of view of the future welfare of dairy cattle in tick areas of the SDP it is important that these problems be sorted quickly and the project commence as soon as possible.
Welfare Guidelines have been developed for the Queensland dairy industry, and have gone a long way to developing a positive public image in relation to dairy cattle welfare.
SRT projects completed and reported include the production of a comprehensive report on " Managing the animal and human health risks and environmental risks associated with fertilising pasture with chicken litter" and a report to the Annual Meeting of the Cattle Veterinarians Society of the Australian Veterinary Association on Neosporosis and abortion in dairy cattle on the Atherton Tableland.

Vaccination awareness

New SRT projects approved include the establishment of farmer awareness of the animal welfare, human health and the economic benefits of vaccination programs for the major cattle diseases and a project to investigate the incidence of mastitis in heifers prior to calving. This latter project will be conducted by a postgraduate student in microbiology who is undertaking a coursework Master's degree at Griffith University.

Lyle Daniel retires

Dr Lyle Daniel has recently retired as the Animal Management representative on the Technical Advisory Group. His place will be taken by Dr Nick Johnson of the University of Queensland.

Project Reports

Human Resources Management
Technical Coordinator
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Priority issues

- Provide assistance and resources for the development of active, well-structured SRTs that fulfil their aims.
- Develop capacity of SRT to:
  a. act as information source,
  b. reflect dairy industry needs
  c. develop small practical local projects efficiently,
  d. critically analyse project proposals,
  e. monitor project implementation and extension.
- Ensure that all groups within the SDP have access to the necessary skills training to develop the abilities to fulfil their roles.
- Ensure that people within the industry receive the training and support necessary to enable them to manage their business effectively, as well as ensuring that future industry leaders are fostered.

Surveys shows progress

In a September 2002 survey, 58 members of the dairy community outside the SDP found that Subtropical Dairy was most effective in developing projects and reflecting dairy industry needs and now also becoming better at informing the community about projects and its activities. This finding shows

progress against the first two goals

In August/ September 2002, 31 members of the SRTs were interviewed by telephone or completed a written questionnaire. Questions broadly reflected the objectives of the SRT component of Subtropical Dairy. That is, that SRT members need to benefit from their involvement. They also have responsibilities to reflect the concerns of the dairy community and to disseminate information to their communities.

The results showed progress against all of the goals and priorities above and where attention needs to be focussed. . The main findings were that the greatest benefits to SRT members came from access to new ideas, information and help when needed. Gaining support from others as well as giving support also rated highly.

The majority of SRT members (58%) felt that the role of their SRT was to reflect the needs to of their dairy community and collect research ideas. Working on projects and informing the dairy community about research findings accounted for 26% and 19% of the comments respectively.

Concerns of the dairy community were mainly collected through personal contact and networks. A number of comments were also made that members themselves reflect their dairy community and, therefore, the needs they put forward are also the needs of the community. The value of seeking the views and opinions of departmental and commercial personnel because of their experience and more extensive contacts was also mentioned.

The concerns are dealt with either by research or by providing solutions if the information is to hand.

Communication with the dairy community is again mainly through personal contact and networks. Issues of communication between some SRTs and the SDP (raised last year) seem to have been resolved.

In their final comments, four members (each from a different SRT) mentioned that motivation was an issue for the members of their group. It was also identified as an issue by a member of the Management Committee.

Even though there were positive comments to the questions in all areas, members suggested improvements. These were mainly to do with better communication with their dairy community and being more vigilant about collecting research ideas.

Better communication was also identified as an issue through the survey of dairy farmers and others not associated with the SDP. Despite being than better than previous years, messages about projects and findings were not always getting through.

Management Committee

An evaluation strategy was developed for the Management Committee of Subtropical Dairy. It involved Committee members collecting data about the operation of the Committee, the content they deal with and issues relating to SRTs. These data are then reported to the Management Committee. This strategy was to ensure the effective management of business of the SDP.

Monitoring of, and reporting on, the process used in the meeting has made meetings run more efficiently. This continues to be the case for 2002. At this stage, there are no data to assess if the content the Management Committee deals with is valid because responsibility for that area has just changed hands. Data about SRT issues are also not reported on although there is evidence that some of the major concerns are acted on. A suggestion was made that reporting on SRT issues should be a permanent agenda item as should reporting on whether the Management Committee is dealing with its core business. Therefore, at this stage, only the meeting process is being monitored with effect. The other two areas still need formalising or action.

SRT projects underway

There are approximately 40 current projects across all SRTs with the major activity being in the North and South East Queensland with 11 projects each.

Sub Tropical Dairy Programme Limited

Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended June 30, 2002

INCOME	$	
SDP001- Admin, SRT Devt, Comms, Nat Proj Involvement	60,164.41	
SDP003 Small Projects	72,500.00	
SDP004 - Project Development	26,134.93	
DAQ177 – NRM Better Management Practice	66,033.00	
Regional Action Plan	5,709.09	
SDP008 - Annual Forum	271.95	
SDP10784 - Strategic Planning	4,240.91	
Total Income		**$235,054.29**
EXPENDITURE		
SDP001 - SRT Development	11,885.25	
- Communication, Annual reports etc	24,823.01	
- National Projects	17,881.45	
- Administration	36,545.55	
SDP003 – Small Projects	41,912.29	
SDP004 – Project Development	41,996.11	
DAQ177 (NHT982708) - NRM Better Management Practice	80,181.42	
NHT Funds - DD04 – Native Pasture Management Project	7,954.90	
Regional Action Plan	4,044.59	
SDP008 - Annual Forum	23,919.55	
SDP10784 - Strategic Planning	13,599.85	
Total Expenditure		**$304,743.97**
NET INCOME		**$(69,689.68)**

Sub Tropical Dairy Programme Limited

Project Areas and Expenditure 2001-02 (x $1000)

Funding Source:	DRDC SDP	DRDC / National	Collaborative Funding
1. FEED SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT			
DAQ164 Perennial Rye –Extension (Lowe)	21.2		25
DAQ10785 Mutdapilly Farmlets	100	50	799
Feeding/heat stress (grazing)	30	50	120
Sustainable wet area legumes (Lowe/Walker)	50	60	113
DAQ10756 Improving forage peanut seed (Cox)	23.2		30
DAN100A Nat Forage Cons Project	20		122
FNP41 Contribution to National Farmlet coordinator	7.3		
2. NATURAL RESOURCES			
DAQ155 D Downs soils (Chattaway)	40.5		86.5
DAQ177 Resource Management (Gramshaw)	120	61	320
3. WHOLE FARM MANAGEMENT			
UQ10833 Managing Dairy Businesses	30	200	835
4. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT			
SDP003 SRT Development & Small Projects	Included in Program Conduct		
REC001 Monitoring & Evaluation Project	16		
SDSP008 Annual Forum	24.6		6
5. ANIMAL MANAGEMENT			
Tick-Fungal Control Feasibility study (Turner)	QDPI		
Tick Research CSIRO/UQ/QDPI (Turner)	DRDC		
Nat. Projects -Lameness, CDDC, In Calf Extn-delivery	Included In Project Development		
6. PROGRAM CONDUCT			
SDP006 Program conduct	147		150
CHAM001 Program Management	51		
Total	**680.8**	**421**	**2,596.5**

DRDC Allocation to Subtropical Dairy 01/02	$670,2870
Total Project Value	$3,698,300
Subtropical Dairy Input	$ 680,800
Value adding of Subtropical Dairy funds	**x 5.43 times**

Annual Report 2001-2002

For more information about Subtropical Dairy contact the Program Manager

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DAIRY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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