



**Dairying for Tomorrow
2006 Survey of NRM Practices on Dairy Farms**

Tasmania shows up well in national dairy farmer survey of NRM practices

Background to the survey:

Dairy Australia has recently completed a major national dairy farm survey to determine current natural resource management practices and identify changes since the 2000 baseline survey.

Key aspects of the survey covered water use, land management, effluent management, fertiliser management, biodiversity and waterways.

60 Tasmanian dairy farms were randomly chosen for the survey. This represents over 12% of the industry.

Data from the survey will provide the industry with insight into improved practices on dairy farms and identify areas requiring further improvement.

Tasmanian Dairying for Tomorrow Coordinator Mark Smith says the survey shows some of the dairy industry programs are hitting the mark and on farm improvements are happening. This includes areas such as effluent management, water efficiency, waterway management and fertiliser management.

“The dairy industry has had a major push into a number of natural resource management areas and it is pleasing to see the independent survey confirm this. We need to continue these efforts and support farmers with the knowledge and resources to better manage their land and water assets.”

Examples of programs that will be operating in these areas include:

- Dairy effluent management
- Water use efficiency
- Waterway and vegetation fencing
- Operation of the DairySAT. Self assessment for farm environmental management.

Details on the survey and the full report are available from DairyTas and from the Dairying for Tomorrow website at www.dairyingfortomorrow.com and Mark Smith on ph 64322233, or www.dairytas.com.au.

November 10th 2006.

Tasmanian Dairying for Tomorrow Survey
A summary of results

Water and Irrigation

- There has been little change in the number of farmers using irrigation but the average proportion of land irrigated has risen from 28 to 38%. Tasmanian farms use on average less than half of the irrigation water as the national average (181ML compared to 386MLs). This difference is impacted by a number of variables including rainfall and climatic conditions.
- Average water use per hectare of irrigated area is 2.51ML compared to 4.80ML nationally.
- Farm dams supplied 49% of the irrigation water with 33% of water sourced from rivers.
- 60% of Tasmanian dairy farms have some automation compared to 38% nationally.

Fertiliser and Soils

- 78% of Tasmanian dairy farmers have used a prescription blend, up from 56% in 2000. This compares to 43% nationally.
- 92% of dairy farmers soil test their farm with 50% doing it each year. This is much higher than nationally.
- There has been an increase in the numbers using professional advice on fertiliser application.
- 38% of farmers do some form of nutrient budgeting.
- 47% are attempting to reduce fertiliser loss into waterways; up from 25% in 2000.

Effluent Management

- Just over half of the respondents believe their effluent disposal system can be improved and 30% intend to do so over the coming years including dispersing it over a greater area and linking into their irrigation.
- Most believe that independent advice is important.

General Farm Management

- 78% have at least some of their native vegetation fenced off up from 64% in 2000. 10% have plans for fencing in the near future.
- 73% of farmers have some part of their waterways fenced off. This is more than double the national average and up from the figure in 2000.
- Nearly 4 in 10 farmers with native vegetation and waterways on their farm believe that their management can be improved.
- 42% of farmers are involved in some form of NRM program or group, up from 26% in 2000.