Dairy Pre-Farm Gate PGP Quarter 3, 2011/12
(January - March 2012)

Executive Summary

Overall, the programme is progressing well and delivering planned outputs. The one area where there is concern is in the project designed to manage industry information under the Dairy Industry Data Network.

1. Theme 1 – On Farm Innovation and Research

This theme continues to make significant progress as it aims to increase the productive potential, resource use efficiency and product value behind the farm gate.

Pasture Persistency confirms that there are phenotypic differences between survivor plant populations: The persistence survey of 21,000 plants derived from the survivor plants collected from dairy farm paddocks in autumn 2011 has been compared to 'control' plants derived from seed of the cultivars. Significant and systematic differences between control and survivor plants were identified. This is a significant step because it confirms that there are phenotypic differences between survivor populations of perennial ryegrass and provides confidence that the project is moving in the right direction.

The wider dairy industry network concept is being advanced: Government, industry and agri-business are investing in data collection, databases and interfaces with farmers and other data users. Examples of this include NAIT, Dairy Core Database, NIWA climate data, INfovet and MilkHub. The potential to link these for the benefit of farmers and the wider industry has been recognised. Whilst access to some genetic data has yet to be resolved, considerable advances are occurring in other areas.

Work is progressing in the development of herd test protocols for use of distributed milking systems (DMS) and to capture of data from in-line and automated metering systems. The aim is to enable data collected from DMS to be submitted to the core database in return for breeding values for a farmer's cows and to expand the sources (e.g. in-line sensors) from which data can be uploaded to the National Animal Evaluation Database via a Certified Data Partner. Importantly commercial companies are part of the on-farm testing of the first draft of the herd test protocols.

2. Theme 2 – Building Capability for a Sustainable Future

A number of projects are continuing to be implemented on farm by increasing knowledge and providing benchmarks, guidelines and training.

Nutrient management has developed performance benchmarks for nutrient loss and nutrient use efficiency on farm. Development of regional indicators has been completed and released by DairyNZ and FertResearch, the collaborators on this project. For the first time industry has access to information to benchmark existing farms in relation to nutrient use efficiency. These indicators allow for a much more targeted conversation with farmers and therefore greater focus on nutrient use efficiency and good management practice. Direct

feedback to participating farmers has provided information on how they are managing nutrients in relation to others with similar geography.

Effluent Management accreditation is underway. The recent development of the Farm Dairy Effluent (FDE) System Design Accreditation programme will ensure the Code of Practice is implemented. Uptake of the accreditation programme will be a key measure of success and a measure of improved professionalism in this sector. Commercial companies are now in the process of gaining FDE System Design Accreditation. Five companies, including four of the biggest companies operating in this area, have gained accreditation: this is a major achievement for the project.

Progress on drafting a range of guidelines, design standards and training programmes related to effluent management has been a focus since the inception of this part of the programme. Each of the guidelines, standards and training programmes are now in use. The outputs of this project will support installation and upgrades of effluent systems that are capable of 365 days per year compliance.

Animal Welfare delivers StockSense workshops to farmers. This quarter has seen successful delivery of the pilot Stock Sense workshops. These workshops provide hands-on training to farmers in the areas of “cow-health and well-being” and “calf-rearing” This pilot lays a foundation for moving delivery to training organisations. Work within the industry has increased awareness and support among stakeholders. Trainers will be equipped with the latest industry-good practice and skills to train farmers.

The aim of this project is to develop capability and industry agreed standards in assessing and diagnosing animal husbandry and management issues or risks on-farm, develop appropriate relevant farm management plans to resolve those issues or risks and improve future farm business resilience, and develop or identify training for practitioners and service providers.