



Paul giving the advisory group a tour of the farm



Dave Barber (DAFQ) and Rod McLennan (Warwick Dairy Farmer) discuss the focus farm

# Focus Farm Update Identifying The Major Opportunities

Subtropical Dairy's Focus Farm project is now in full swing with the advisory group meeting once every two months. The advisory group is made up of eight dairy farmers, four industry representatives and two service providers from outside of dairying. There is a vast range of skills and experience amongst the group from financial to nutrition and herd management.

Paul and Jo Judge currently lease a farm at Gowrie Junction near Toowoomba and are looking at ways to generate wealth to progress their dairy career pathway.

A strategic analysis of the focus farm business is in progress. Key focus areas (refer to Table 1) have been identified and will form the basis of the advisory groups discussions.

The first area of investigation has been regarding Feedbase where Paul and Jo have established the following key performance indicators (KPI's) that they will be aiming for:

- Produce 12 tonne DM/ha per year;
- Have at least 75% homegrown feed that costs less than 20c/litre with total cost of production not exceeding 35c/litre;
- 10% of annual feed requirements to be as stored feed;
- Developing a feed budget 365 days feed supply mapped for 180 cows/day.

A major limiting factor for the achieving these KPI's is the irrigation infrastructure. Currently 45 hectares of pastures are being irrigated by three side roll spray lines, four span centre pivot and a k-line pod system,

An assessment has recently been conducted by Pat Daley through the Dairy Fodder for Profit Program and



Peter Morris (Toowoomba Home Loans) gets up close and personal with the cows during the tour of the focus farm

Table 1

KEY FOCUS AREA	KEY AIM	CURRENT
FEEDBASE	To increase production to 12tonnes DM/ha by growing perennial based pastures.	Currently achieving 7 tonnes DM/ha
HERD	Increase production to 5200 litres/cow	Currently at 4000 litres/cow
LABOUR MANAGEMENT	Utilise technology or employee labour to improve the efficiency of operations	Currently only employee a relief milker
LIFESTYLE	To manage the business so that there is good work/life balance for the family	Currently working 7 days/week
FINANCIAL	To grow equity	Currently debt free

found that "The current irrigation system has a very low application efficiency<sup>1</sup> which is due to the high labour demand and the system design". This is impacting on the ability to produce feed, which in turn is limiting the herd production potential and tying Paul to the farm seven days a week.

Moving forward Paul and Jo will focus on working through what their financial borrowing capacity is with banks, investing in an irrigation upgrade and employing some part time labour. ■■

1. application efficiency is a measure of how much of the water applied can be used by the crop

For a complete overview of the farm, please view the focus farm video at <https://vimeo.com/244574233>