



## Focus Farm Update Irrigation Upgrade

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The Dairy Australia Focus Farm model aims to provide local visibility around key on-farm decisions and farm performance over time. Subtropical Dairy's current Focus Farm is leased by Paul and Jo Judge at Gowrie Junction near Toowoomba. An advisory group, made up of farmers and industry personnel, meet every two months and through facilitated discussions examine key focus areas within the business.

A key focus area for Paul and Jo Judge's dairy business is to increase pasture utilisation to 12 tonnes dry matter (DM)/ha by growing more perennial based pastures. The farm is currently estimated to be utilising around 7 tonnes DM/ha with the herd of 150 cows producing approximately 700,000 litres/year. Paul and Jo's goal for the farm is to increase production to 1 million litres/year from a 180-cow milking herd while also achieving labour efficiencies.

One of the major limiting factors for achieving this goal is the irrigation infrastructure. Currently 60 hectares of pastures are being irrigated by three side roll spray lines, a four-span centre pivot and a K-Line pod system which includes hand shift pipes. After an on-farm assessment by Ross Warren from DAF (funded by the Dairy Fodder for Profit Program), it was 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".

Paul and Jo have done a lot of research with various local irrigation equipment companies and decided to purchase a four span Reinke Pivot with end guns that will have the capacity to irrigate 15.5 ha in a ¾ circle configuration. Paul also



investigated various power options needed to run this irrigation system and has decided that a 12Kva diesel generator will be cheaper to run than electricity. It also has the advantage that Paul and Jo can take the generator with them at the end of the lease.

With the three remaining side rollers, one will stay as it is currently irrigating lucerne. One will be sold and the other relocated to where the K-line system is currently being used and will grow crops requiring less irrigation.

It is planned that the system will be installed and operational by end of April 2018.

If you are interested in looking at the new irrigation system and hearing about the farm's pasture production plans, an **Open Day** is being held on **Thursday 31st May, 2018** at Paul and Jo's farm. The day will not only focus on the new irrigation system but take a comprehensive look at the current and planned pasture production for the farm. A discussion will also be held covering pathways to dairy ownership specifically looking at the pros and cons of leasing versus ownership. ■■

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

For further information about the open day, please contact Vivienne McCollum on 0428 718 620, [vivienne@subtropicaldairy.com.au](mailto:vivienne@subtropicaldairy.com.au) or contact your local Subtropical Dairy Extension Coordinator.