

# DataGene: driving dairy herd improvement

**DataGene is an independent and industry-owned organisation responsible for driving herd improvement for the Australian dairy industry.**

Formed in 2016, DataGene's first two functions have been genetic evaluation (the role previously performed by the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme) and managing the software which runs most herd test centres (DataGene Centre). One of the first deliverables will be the much-awaited central data repository (CDR), with the first stage due for release later in 2017.

Combining these three functions will create a critical mass of scientific and computing power on a scale the industry has not previously been able to access. This will enable vastly more data to be accessed and will generate opportunities to deliver modern tools and resources that will transform dairy herd improvement in Australia. There's a lot at stake; the Lacey and Coats report from 2013 estimated that better herd improvement decisions could deliver an extra \$25m in profit on farm.

Dairy farmers can expect to benefit from DataGene through: easier decisions, smarter systems, faster access to data, better tools and more profit. DataGene is developing modern, user-friendly tools and software programs designed specifically for dairy farmers and their service providers. These tools will draw upon data made accessible through the central data repository. The CDR will allow seamless access to herd records from multiple sources, for example records held on farm computers, at vets and breed societies. Smarter systems will allow for easier data entry by farmers and others in the industry. Having access to vastly more data will enable scientists to provide more reliable Australian Breeding Values and indices; as well as opportunities for world leading research and the development of breeding values for new traits. Combined, these things will make it easier and faster for dairy farmers to make better herd improvement decisions, based on relevant data.

Two new tools have been released recently: the Herd Test Dashboard and a new App for entering herd health and other data

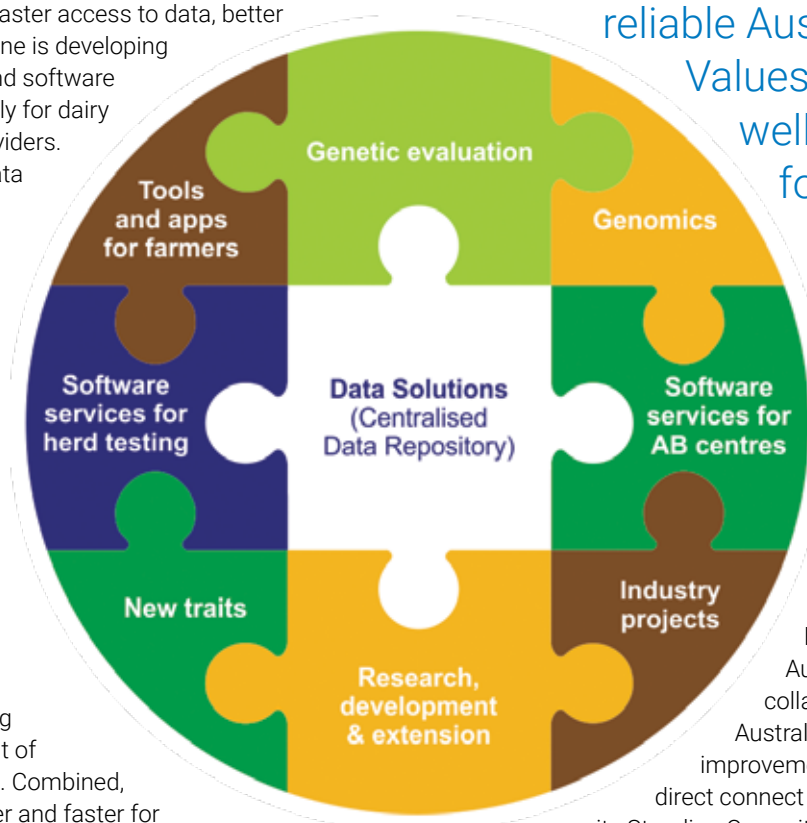
on a smart phone or tablet.

## Xhead: Collaboration

Collectively, Australian Dairy Farmers and Dairy Australia have 50% membership rights in DataGene and NHIA has a 15% stake. However, DataGene's success will rely on a highly collaborative approach so it has been set up to allow for the remaining 35% of membership to be made up by industry organisations. In recent months, 19 industry organisations have taken up membership in DataGene. Membership involves both a financial investment and a commitment to collaborate. Members come from all sectors of the HI industry including herd test companies, AB companies, breed societies and other organisations.

DataGene CEO Dr Matt Shaffer said the response from the HI industry signalled strong support for a collaborative approach

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to herd improvement through DataGene.

"DataGene is a major investment by Australian levy payers through Dairy Australia. In addition to the collaboration between Dairy Australia, ADF and the herd improvement industry, DataGene has a direct connect to farmers through its Board, its Standing Committees and its user groups," he

said.

**The centralised data repository, set to be delivered mid-year will enable DataGene to deliver innovative tools and service to drive genetic improvement in Australian dairy herds. ■ ■ ■**

