

# Mid-career farmers pilot Business Dairy Network (BDN)

Mid-Career farmers on the Sunshine Coast have been participating in a pilot program for the past two years called the Business Dairy Network (BDN). This pilot project is managed by Subtropical Dairy with funding from the Australia Government Department of Social Services. It has looked at the feasibility of setting up a mid-career network that farmers could move onto after graduating from the Young Dairy Network. The farmers participating in the pilot decided that the purpose of the group would be about "Mooving dairy businesses to prosperity" with the target to plan, evaluate, change and grow their businesses through people, profit and practice.

Two hubs were formed on the Sunshine Coast with four to six dairy businesses involved in each. The Gympie Hub decided to focus on building a tool to analyse income over feed costs (IOFC), whereas the Kenilworth Hub has focused on Human Resources.

The IOFC tool was developed in conjunction with Dr Brad Granzin. The IOFC tool enables farmers to undertake some short-term business analysis (e.g. a month by month basis) focused on nutritional management and herd performance. The tool analyses revenue, feed costs, diet performance and overhead costs. The group has used the results from the IOFC tool to review profitability and key

indicators between farms during different seasons, plus how their own farms vary in profitability during the year. The IOFC tool also has an output comparing the IOFC for individual feedstuffs based on their cost, total nutrient content and herd nutrient requirements.

The Kenilworth Hub has been focused on the Human Resources (HR) side to their businesses and in particular building procedure manuals for use on-farm. They have been working with Di Gresham to work through various aspects of managing staff and looking towards building a HR manual for their farms. The Kenilworth Hub also recently analysed their February 2017 farm performance through the IOFC

tool that the Gympie Hub developed.

One of the great outcomes from the BDN has been being able to capitalise on the relationships and trust developed between members of the Young Dairy Network (YDN). As farmers move to the next stage of their dairy career from YDN and look to discuss more sensitive topics such as financial business performance and staff, this trust allows them to have open conversations in confidence.

The pilot project will finish at the end of June 2017. Subject to evaluation and funding, Subtropical Dairy will look to continue the model going forward.



**TARGETS**

**DRIVER**

**KEYS**

**OPERATOR**



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

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