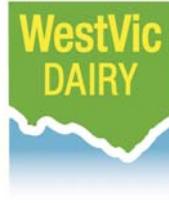


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## RESOURCES, BRANDING AND FACILITIES HIGHLIGHTED

The creation of a brand to promote the south-west dairy industry, effluent management, access to water, developing better data, and establishing local facilities for research and development have been highlighted as key priorities for advancing the south-west Victorian dairy industry.

The priorities emerged from a WestVic Dairy 'checking the wheel' forum at Glenormiston College on May 12 which reviewed the progress of the industry's strategic plan, Driving Down the Track.

About 80 dairy farmers, service industry personnel, and representatives of processors, local government, and state government authorities took part in the review.

Twenty one priorities identified at the workshop will now be considered, and ratified for action by the Driving Down the Track management committee and the WestVic Dairy Board of Directors will then consider those for service levy investment.

The new priorities are intended to complement existing actions already underway to drive the south-west dairy industry towards Down the Track's goal of the region producing three billion litres of milk by 2020.

Driving Down the Track is an action plan to grow the dairy industry in Western Victoria which was started in 2008.

The new priorities cover natural resources, people, infrastructure, capital, markets, production and knowledge pillars.

Project facilitator Karen Wales said the priorities were part of a vision for the future of the dairy industry. "There are obviously benefits in having a plan which can feed the dairy industry's priorities into local and state government and position dairying at the centre of the region's economy," she said.

Farmers at the forum highlighted the need for natural resource protection, including access to water, better effluent management and ensuring farmers have access natural resources for their operations.

The proposed development of a south-west interactive dairy centre and milk harvesting facility at DemoDAIRY were supported at the forum, as was the identification of knowledge needs.

A regional reference group for animal welfare, reproductive management plans for farms and increasing participation in herd testing were identified as options for boosting production.

Integrating strategic planning into farm business, promoting investment in the region, and developing a brand and marketing the dairy industry were identified as keys for future growth.

It was also suggested that improved leadership, programs to attract more adults to dairying and improved data to would identify the industry's needs.

There were also calls for more awareness about energy generation on farm and ensuring farms are ready for the national broadband network.

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WestVic Dairy Executive Officer Mike Weise said the review process had exceeded expectations in bringing together key regional players and highlighting measures that will improve outcomes for farmers and drive expansion of the industry.

“The various government and industry officials in attendance have gone away with better understanding of the needs of the dairy industry,” he said.

Mr Weise said good progress had been made on the original group of top 10 actions and it was timely to review other priorities to ensure the plan remained relevant to farmers and the industry.

Achievements from the first group of priorities set in February 2010 have included establishing a regional transport committee, development of dairy employee training programs, leadership programs, improved links with local councils and the Great South Coast plan and financial literacy programs for women farmers.