

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



Wednesday, 10 November 2021

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY: FARMING INTO THE FUTURE

The Andrews Labor Government is backing new technology on Victorian farms to improve the resilience, sustainability and efficiency of dairy businesses.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas visited Mark and Kate Walpole's dairy farm at Yielima today to commend the Northern Victorian dairy farmers for their innovation on farm, while facing the challenges of water security, commodity price fluctuation and climate change.

The Walpoles are working to modernise their property to adapt to climate change and other seasonal challenges by installing dairy freestalls with self-composting bedding and improved cow comfort.

The *Dairy Transition project* is a collaboration between the Labor Government and Dairy Australia which is supporting dairy farmers like Mark and Kate to adopt new practices and technologies.

This program has been backed by a \$556,000 investment from the Victorian Government and provides practical support to farmers to help them make decisions that will make their businesses more sustainable.

Agriculture Victoria specialists have provided advice and support to dairy farmers to allow them to move away from traditional grazing systems to boost farm profitability and better support animal welfare and the environment.

Through the Dairy Transition project, some Victorian dairy farmers have implemented robotic milkers replacing their ageing milking facilities. At Macorna, north-west of Echuca, a dairy business has put into use an eight unit robotic dairy and compost barn which is capable of housing and milking nearly 500 cows.

Other projects include modernising dairy housing systems which reuse water, recycle manure for bedding and can be adapted to capture methane for energy.

To help farmers navigate the complexities associated with transitioning to new production systems or adopting new technologies, Agriculture Victoria has partnered with industry to develop the *National Dairy Feedpad and Contained Housing Guidelines*.

While the industry has been challenged by dry seasonal conditions and financial stress in recent years it is bouncing back, particularly in the state's north where there has been a significant improvement in farm profits and a significant uptake of new and emerging farm technologies.

In 2020-21 the Government supported 80 dairy farm modernisation developments worth \$577 million which significantly increased milk production and created new jobs.

For more information visit: agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"The Dairy Transition project is helping Victorian farmers navigate their way through this rapid period of change and modernisation to ensure the sector continues to move ahead with resilience and confidence."

"I encourage all dairy farmers to take part in this project, by thinking of new ways they can transition into modern technologies, and innovative methods to adapt to the challenges of climate change."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes

"Dairy farmers are embracing new technology and practices at an unprecedented rate which is why the Dairy Transition project is so timely and important."

Media contact: Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | Nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au