

Summary

1. **Report Title:** Report: Evaluation Activities Subtropical Dairy
2. **The evaluation was commissioned by:** The Subtropical Dairy Program
3. **The evaluation was undertaken by:** Roberts Evaluation Pty Ltd
4. **Date of the evaluation report :** December 2006
5. **Synopsis**

The Subtropical Dairy Program is a regional, program of Dairy Australia which is a research and development corporation of the dairy industry in Australia. The Subtropical Dairy Program is itself divided into seven subregional groups that are scattered from Northern Queensland to Northern NSW, the area covered by the Subtropical Dairy Program.

The processes used by Subtropical Dairy to engage with its dairy farming community are evaluated each year. The evaluation activities vary slightly from year to year, and for 2006 they were:

1. Review of 2005 evaluation recommendations.
2. Monitoring of the experience of members of Regional Groups.
3. Evaluation of views and opinions of the usefulness of Subtropical Dairy to those not directly associated with it.
4. Evaluation of the strategies used by the Management Committee through a review of minutes of meetings and interviews with relevant members of the MC.
5. Evaluation of the activities of the Technical Advisory Group.
6. Evaluation of the Subtropical Dairy Annual Forum.

September 2006

REPORT EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Subtropical Dairy

Prepared for
The Management Committee

By

Roberts Evaluation Pty Ltd



Photo front cover. Friesians on the McGuinness property.

Photos by Kate Roberts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATED TERMS	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
1.1 EVALUATION ACTIVITY I: ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2005	6
1.2 REVIEW OF MEMBERS OF REGIONAL GROUPS	6
1.3 REVIEW OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE DAIRY INDUSTRY NOT ASSOCIATED WITH SUBTROPICAL DAIRY	7
1.4 REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE.....	8
1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS 2006.....	8
2 INTRODUCTION	10
2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THIS EVALUATION	10
3 METHODOLOGY	11
4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	12
4.1 ACTIONS FROM 2005 RECOMMENDATIONS	12
4.2 MONITORING THE EXPERIENCE OF MEMBERS OF REGIONAL GROUPS.....	13
4.2.1 <i>Introduction</i>	13
4.2.2 <i>Location of respondents</i>	14
4.2.3 <i>Regional group help with the management of the dairy enterprise</i>	15
4.2.4 <i>Level of involvement in Regional Groups or Subtropical Dairy</i>	17
4.2.5 <i>Involvement in research</i>	18
4.2.6 <i>Changing the level of involvement in Regional Groups</i>	20
4.2.7 <i>Research and priorities</i>	21
4.2.8 <i>Links, networks and relationships with other organisations</i>	21
4.2.9 <i>Communicating the results of dairy projects</i>	22
4.2.10 <i>Regional groups help with the identification and achievement of goals</i>	22
4.2.11 <i>Regional group goals</i>	23
4.2.12 <i>How can regional group operations be improved?</i>	25
4.2.13 <i>General Comments</i>	27
4.2.14 <i>How regional group members look for information</i>	29
4.2.15 <i>Interest in training</i>	30
4.3 SURVEY OF DAIRY COMMUNITY NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH SUBTROPICAL DAIRY	30
4.3.1 <i>Summary</i>	30
4.3.2 <i>Who took part</i>	31
4.3.3 <i>How much was known about Subtropical Dairy</i>	32
4.3.4 <i>How much was known about the Regional Groups</i>	33
4.3.5 <i>Concerns and issues facing the dairy industry that Subtropical Dairy can influence</i>	33
4.3.6 <i>Providing information about these needs, concerns and issues to Subtropical Dairy</i>	35
4.3.7 <i>Effectiveness of Subtropical Dairy</i>	36
4.3.8 <i>How effective the regional group has been</i>	36
4.3.9 <i>What Subtropical Dairy can do better in the future</i>	37
4.3.10 <i>Where do they go to find information</i>	39
4.3.11 <i>Use of electronic means in businesses</i>	40
4.4 EVALUATION STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	40
4.4.1 <i>Operation of Subtropical Dairy</i>	41
4.4.2 <i>Operation of Management Committee</i>	44
4.5 EVALUATION OF THE PORTFOLIOS	45
4.5.1 <i>Feed Management</i>	46
4.5.2 <i>Natural Resource Management</i>	48
4.5.3 <i>Animal Management</i>	49
4.5.4 <i>Farm Business Management</i>	51
4.5.5 <i>Human Resource Management</i>	52
4.5.6 <i>Communication</i>	53
4.6 EVALUATION OF THE SUBTROPICAL DAIRY ANNUAL FORUM.....	53

4.6.1	Summary.....	53
4.6.2	What was most useful from the Forum this year?.....	54
4.6.3	Feedback from a debrief.....	57
5	APPENDICES.....	59
5.1	PHOTOS FROM THE FORUM DINNER 2006.....	59
5.2	DAIRY AUSTRALIA RDP KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	60
5.3	THEORIES OF CHANGE.....	65

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Number of members in each regional group.....	13
Figure 2.	Location of respondents	14
Figure 3.	Ranking of regional group help in managing dairy enterprise	15
Figure 4.	Ranking of regional group help in managing dairy enterprise – by region	16
Figure 5.	Type of help offered by Regional Groups	17
Figure 6.	Type of involvement with regional group	18
Figure 7.	Level of involvement in research	19
Figure 8.	Level of involvement in research - by region.....	20
Figure 9.	How project results are communicated to the wider dairy industry.....	22
Figure 10.	Regional group written goals	24
Figure 11.	Regional group written goals - by region	24
Figure 12	Where producers access information	29
Figure 13	Ownership of broadband	29
Figure 14.	Farmers taking part in the survey	31
Figure 15	Composition of outsiders survey (excluding farmers)	32
Figure 16.	Knowledge and awareness of SD.....	32
Figure 17.	Awareness and knowledge about Regional Groups	33
Figure 18	Needs, concerns & issues that SD can influence.....	34
Figure 19.	Provision of information to SD	35
Figure 20	Effectiveness of SD	36
Figure 21	Effectiveness of Regional Groups	37
Figure 22.	Improvements that can be made to SD in the future.....	38
Figure 23	Where do respondents find information?	39
Figure 24	Use of electronic means in businesses.....	40
Figure 25	What was most useful about the Forum?	54
Figure 26.	What was least useful about the Forum?.....	55
Figure 27.	What will make the biggest difference to participants in the coming year?	56
Figure 28.	What can be improved?.....	56

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1	Issues, needs and concerns raised by non-producers	34
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Glossary of Abbreviated Terms

CQ	Central Queensland
DD	Darling Downs
FNC	Far North Coast
MNC	Mid-North Coast
NQ	North Queensland
QDO	Queensland Dairy Organisation
SD	Subtropical Dairy
SEQ	South-East Queensland
RG	Regional Group

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The dairy farmers, researchers and processors for contributing their time and comments in the survey of the Regional Groups.

Phil Chamberlain for his input to the evaluation.

The Management Committee for their data.

Permission for AES to use for the education of its members

26/05/08

“That will be fine to use that report as requested.”

Laurie (Dunne) chair of the Subtropical management committee

“While some farmers interviewed suggested Subtropical Dairy should be involved in lobbying or do more to improve milk price this is not the role of Subtropical Dairy. Subtropical dairy is an organisation focused on delivering regionally relevant research, development and extension for the northern dairy industry” Janine Teese, manger Subtropical Dairy.

1. Executive Summary

The processes used by Subtropical Dairy are evaluated each year. The evaluation activities vary slightly from year to year, and for 2006 they were:

1. Review of 2005 evaluation recommendations.
2. Monitoring of the experience of members of Regional Groups through interviews (51 - 73% were interviewed).
3. Evaluation of views and opinions of the usefulness of Subtropical Dairy to those not associated with it. This survey is run every second year.
4. Evaluation of the strategy for the Management Committee (MC) through review of minutes of meetings and interviews with relevant members of the MC.
5. Evaluation of the Technical Advisory Group.
6. Evaluation of the Subtropical Dairy Annual Forum.

1.1 Evaluation activity 1: Action on recommendations from 2005

All of the seven recommendations from 2005 have had some action. Some through direct intervention of Subtropical activities such as targeting young farmers, reviewing the goals, and attempting to re-establish a connection with a group and for others, the groups took their own action. According to the comments from group members, more work still needs to be done on issues raised by recommendations from 2005 such as:

Regional groups reviewing their goals and objectives
Support to recruit new members (especially young farmers)
How to have more meetings in an efficient way
A change to some of the group operating procedures

1.2 Review of members of Regional Groups

The most important message to come out of the review again this year is that some dramatic change needs to happen for groups who have asked for the same help from year to year. Members consistently ask for rejuvenation and more contact with each other. They have already suggested solutions such as rotating executive positions and holding teleconferences (as a substitute for some of the face to face meetings).

The main messages to come out of this year's review are mostly positive and continue to express the value of Subtropical Dairy. That makes the implementation of solutions all the more important. Results of the analysis of comments are:

- Regional groups are valued by members. On average, the members scored the groups 3.5 out of 5 with regard to how much the group helps them manage their enterprises (same as 2005) with all groups scoring within a similar range of 3.2 – 3.7.

- 93% of respondents indicated that gaining new ideas was the type of help they received by being a member of their group. Access to information, access to people who can help them and support from others was specified by 80%.
- 84% of members are involved to some extent in research (compared to 73% in 2005) with Mid North Coast, Far North Coast and North Queensland being above average. .
- 67% of members did not want to change their present level of involvement in their Regional Groups or anything about their group.
- Most members believed that the regional group process had helped either their group, or themselves build a relationship with a relevant organisation (for example, government agencies, processors and universities).
- Project results are communicated mainly through informal communication between producers (indicated by 77%), by members presenting at other meetings (73%) and through government and processor newsletters (73%). The Northern Dairytimes continued to be a useful source of information.
- 73% of members felt that their regional group had helped them identify and achieve some or all of their goals (similar to 2005).
- Only 41% of members indicated that they knew their group had written goals (an increase from 33% in 2005). One group has reviewed its goals.
- Recurring themes with regard to improvement of Regional Groups are:
 - The need for more representation from farmers – younger, different, workers
 - To meet more often such as through a telephone hook up
 - To have new or different chairpeople
- Farmers involved in Regional Groups use a range of media to access information. The most common was from other producers (85%), followed by government advisors (83%) and newsletters (83%). However, more than half of the producers also gathered information from the radio (75%), private advisors (71%) and the internet (60%).
- Only 46% of farmers were on broadband.

1.3 Review of individuals in the dairy industry not associated with Subtropical Dairy

Of the 50 respondents, 60% (30) were farmers not involved in Subtropical Dairy. The remaining respondents included DPI researchers, Queensland Dairy Organisation (QDO) executive members, UQ researchers and DPI field staff.

- Awareness and knowledge about Subtropical Dairy is at an all time high. Over 70% of respondents in the 2006 survey had heard of it.
- The main issues for the respondents who were farmers included the price of milk (38%), business management (27%) and pastures and feed (27%).
- Respondents in 2006 believed that the Subtropical Dairy program was effective in: providing information about projects, helping develop projects, helping them consider dairy issues, reflecting industry needs and helping to address dairy issues. This was an improvement from 2004.
- The Regional Groups were also considered to be effective in all of the roles listed above. There was a dramatic improvement in the effectiveness of the Regional Groups to help develop projects from an average of 2 out of 10 in 2004, to 6 out of 10 in 2006.

- Approximately half of the respondents use a range of electronic means in their businesses, such as internet searches, banking and herd management and the farmers in the sample were using more of these means than were the other stakeholders. Only 20% of farmers used broadband.
- Of the respondents, 91% read and valued the Northern Dairytimes and named Anne Chamberlain's contribution particularly.

1.4 Review of the Management Committee structure

The review in this section looked at two aspects of the responsibilities of the Management Committee. The first relates to the management of Subtropical Dairy and the second to the effective and efficient internal operation of the Committee. With regard to an assessment of how the Management Committee manages Subtropical Dairy, three areas were looked at and these were:

- Research priorities or interests;
- The level of satisfaction of regional group members with the actions of Subtropical Dairy; and
- The level of benefit of Regional Group members of the involvement with Subtropical Dairy.

Research priorities and ideas are filtering through to the Management Committee but the process of recording research ideas in the regional group meetings is varied and not reliable. This process has in the past been effective and efficient and may need to be reinstated.

The level of satisfaction with the Management Committee by the Regional Groups is now consistently high. The level of benefit that Regional Group members have with their involvement is dealt with differently. At times, important issues are raised but there is no practical solution, such as the ongoing request for help from the Burnett Group and from the Central Queensland Group for more contact. At other times, issues are not raised at all, such as an internal issue about project development with one of the Groups. The process at least raises some of the issues facing the Groups and records their successes.

Dairy Australia has developed a statement on key performance indicators that needs to be introduced into the evaluation process.

1.5 Recommendations 2006

From the surveys (Regional Groups and non associates)

1. *The Management Committee provide groups with a strategy to recruit new members (especially young farmers).*
2. *Most groups have asked for more meetings. One group has tried a teleconference with success. The Management Committee institute a policy where Regional Group members meet at least every three months and for as many meetings as appropriate to be by teleconference. It is usual for teleconferences to be scheduled for no longer than one hour.*

3. *Some groups have asked for a change in chair and secretary. A system of rotating chair has already been suggested. It is recommended that group members consider limiting the term of executive positions and that they change compulsorily every two years. This is to give all farmers experience in these positions (especially the young) as well as allowing the trial of different management styles and ideas.*

From the Management Committee review

4. *The Management Committee still faces some important challenges to resolve on behalf of Subtropical Dairy such as those to do with the NRM staff. A process outside of the normal meetings maybe needed for their resolution.*
5. *The Management Committee to organise for an invitation to be written and distributed to the Burnett regional dairy farmers inviting them to a BBQ to meet each other and share ideas about research once this move has been approved by the Burnett Regional Group.*
6. *Given that Regional Groups are funded to promote the learning of their members, the Management Committee institute a policy of rotating the chair at least every year so that all members of the Group have experience and learn how to run a Group. This is particularly important for the younger members.*
7. *The Management Committee incorporate into the evaluation process the Dairy Australia statement on RDP key performance indicators when ratified by the Management Committee.*
8. *To ensure that on going and important issues are discussed and resolved effectively, the person responsible for monitoring the meeting process asks about or points out at the end of each Management Committee meeting the issues that need resolution.*

From the Annual Forum

9. *Ensure that there are opportunities for networking to occur at the Annual Forums. At the 2006 Forum, it was found that networks of other dairy farmers as well as with individuals associated with dairy such as tradespeople were important. Trade displays may be need to be a regular feature of the Forums.*
10. *This year's combined Forum with the Queensland Dairy Organisation was a success and should occur regularly every second or third year.*
11. *Regional Group and Technical Advisory Group reports must be given more time. Each report needs to have up to 30 minutes at the disposal of the presenter for the delivery and questions.*

2 Introduction

An evaluation of the structure and operation of Subtropical Dairy is carried out every year and the objectives of this evaluation are:

1. To implement an evaluation strategy that measures activities to reach the Subtropical Dairy (SD) goals and recommend change where appropriate.
2. To coordinate evaluation activities across the five content areas of SD at project and portfolio level.
3. To carry out evaluation activities for the human resources area where the objectives are:
 - To build the capacity of people to ensure there are suitably skilled people to manage SD at all levels and to provide an opportunity for involvement in research, development and extension.
 - To implement inclusive priority setting processes and a system that encourages innovative projects to address these needs.
 - To maintain positive and strong relationships with individuals and organisations relevant to SD.
 - To help inform the dairy industry of the results of relevant, current research.
 - To build the capacity of subtropical dairy farmers to enable them to achieve their goals.

These objectives were developed by the monitoring and evaluation sub-committee of Subtropical Dairy.

2.1 Objectives of this evaluation

The evaluation is guided by the following objectives:

Objective 1. To implement an evaluation strategy that measures activities to reach the Subtropical Dairy (SD) goals and recommend change where appropriate.

Objective 2. To coordinate evaluation activities across the five content areas of SD at project and portfolio level.

Objective 3. To carry out evaluation activities for the human resources area where the objectives are:

- *To build the capacity of people to ensure there are suitably skilled people to manage SD at all levels and to provide an opportunity for involvement in research, development and extension.*
- *To implement inclusive priority setting processes and a system that encourages innovative projects to address these needs.*
- *To maintain positive and strong relationships with individuals and organisations relevant to SD.*
- *To help inform the dairy industry of the results of relevant, current research.*
- *To build the capacity of subtropical dairy farmers to enable them to achieve their goals.*

3 Methodology

The methodology used in the evaluation activities was as follows:

Activity 1. Review the implementation of recommendations from 2005

Here recommendations from the evaluation activities in 2004 are reviewed to see if they were implemented.

Activity 2. Monitoring the experience of members of the Regional Groups

Objectives from the Human Resource section of the Annual Operating Plan (2004 - 2005) of Subtropical Dairy were used to develop questions so progress could be measured against those objectives. This relates to evaluation objective 3. A total of 55 regional group members were contacted, and invited to respond through a telephone interview or faxed questionnaire.

Activity 3. Evaluation strategy for the Management Committee

Data to measure the processes used by the Management Committee was collected through an assessment of the minutes of its meetings, the reports regarding content and process and also through personal contact with each of the Management Committee members who had allocated tasks with regard to the monitoring.

Activity 4. Portfolio managers of the Technical Advisory Group

A proforma for the five portfolios was developed to guide the evaluation of the activities of each of the portfolios. Evaluation data came from the portfolio reports at the Annual Forum, as well as direct contact with the members at this time.

Activity 5. Annual Forum

Data to assess the value of the Annual Forum is collected through post forum questionnaires, observation at the Forum and informal discussion with participants.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Actions from 2005 recommendations

Some action was taken on all of these recommendations. In some cases it was a direct intervention by Subtropical Dairy and in other cases Regional Groups took their own action.

2005 recommendation 1. As was recommended in the last review (2004), Regional Groups should consider reviewing their goals and objectives through the use of an efficient process.

This is still an outstanding job for most groups apart from the Darling Downs where a formal process was used to review goals. Only members from one other group thought that they had reviewed their goals but even here their recollections were mixed.

Not recently
Last year.
Last meeting
Constantly reviewing our goals so we can get better.
Not for some time.
Not since they were written
Every 12 months

2005 recommendation 2. Encourage greater involvement in research because there is a strong correlation between this and the value that members get out of their membership.

There was an increase in involvement in research by members in 2006 compared to 2005.

2005 recommendation 3. Re-establish a connection with groups who have drifted from SD but still want to stay involved.

There was a deliberate attempt to re-engage with the Burnett group but at this stage it is still in recession.

2005 recommendation 4. Support groups to recruit new members (especially young farmers) where groups ask for it.

The Darling Downs young farmers' project is a step to recruit young farmers. However, it seems that a greater involvement in the group by mentoring them in executive positions may also help.

2005 recommendation 5. Some groups have asked for more meetings and shorter meetings. Help facilitate this.

The South East Queensland group tried teleconferencing as a means of meeting and that seems to have been successful.

2005 recommendation 6. Members of some groups would benefit from a change to some of the operating procedures of their group such as having a rotating chair. This may be difficult to institute where there is an entrenched chair. The Management Committee is asked to consider where these changes need to occur and how they can be implemented without inappropriate disruption.

By default, some groups will change chairs in 2006. However more formal means of limiting the term may be useful.

2005 recommendation 7. MC members to assess the value they receive from being a part of the Management Committee.

Data for this will be collected at the 2006 Annual Forum.

4.2 Monitoring the experience of members of Regional Groups

4.2.1 Introduction

A total of 51 members of the Regional Groups from a possible total of 85 (60%) contributed their views and opinions through a telephone survey. Even though Burnett is listed in the graph below, members of that group were not included in this year's survey because they have not met as a group in 2006.

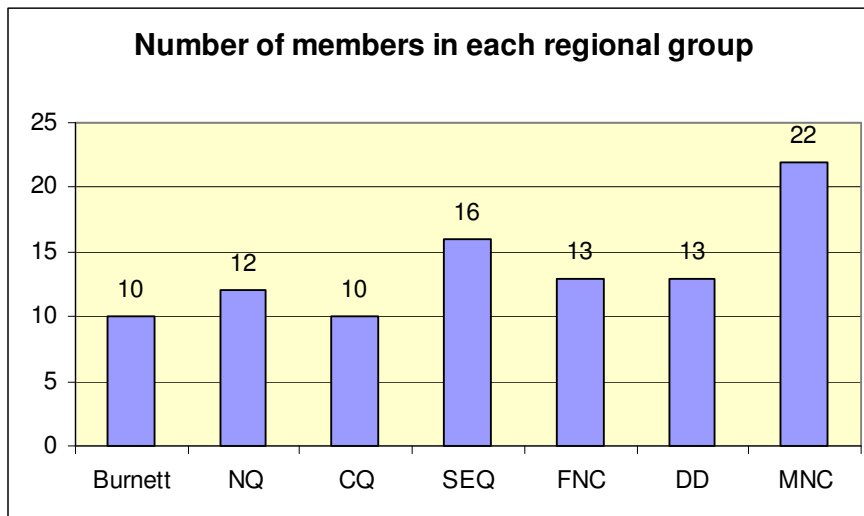


Figure 1. Number of members in each regional group

Of those surveyed, 44 (86%) were producers. The remaining interviewees included government or processor representatives, or other stakeholders who are involved as

members of the Regional Groups. All respondents were asked questions relating to the five goals of the Subtropical Dairy program. These goals are:

1. To build the capacity of people to ensure there are suitably skilled people to manage Sustainable Dairy at all levels and to provide an opportunity for involvement in research, development and extension.
2. To implement inclusive priority setting processes and a system that encourages innovative projects to address these needs.
3. To maintain positive and strong relationships with individuals and organisations relevant to Sustainable Dairy.
4. To help inform the dairy industry of the results of relevant, current research.
5. To build the capacity of Subtropical Dairy farmers to enable them to achieve their goals.

The survey is attached as an appendix.

4.2.2 Location of respondents

Respondents were asked to identify the regional group of which they were a member. As Figure 2 shows, there was a good representation from each of the six Regional Groups including Central Queensland, Darling Downs, Far North Coast, North Queensland and South-East Queensland. While several members of the Burnett group were contacted, none were still active in the Subtropical Dairy program.

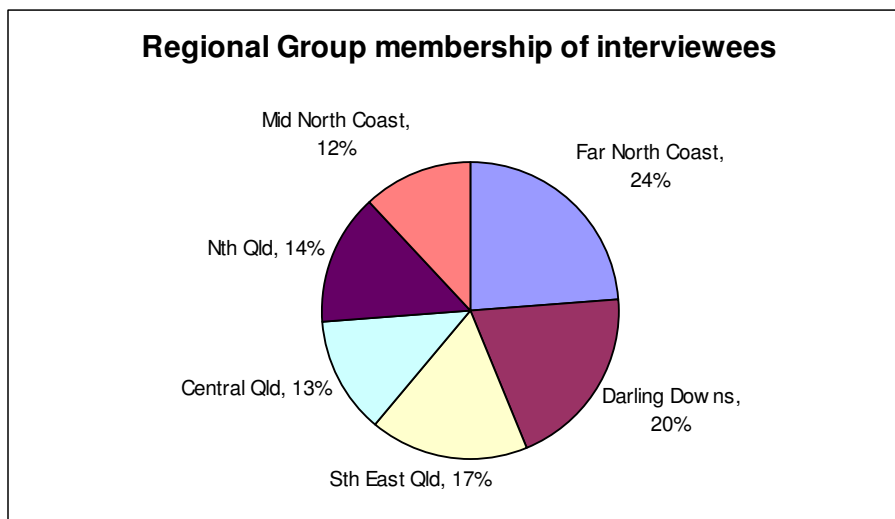
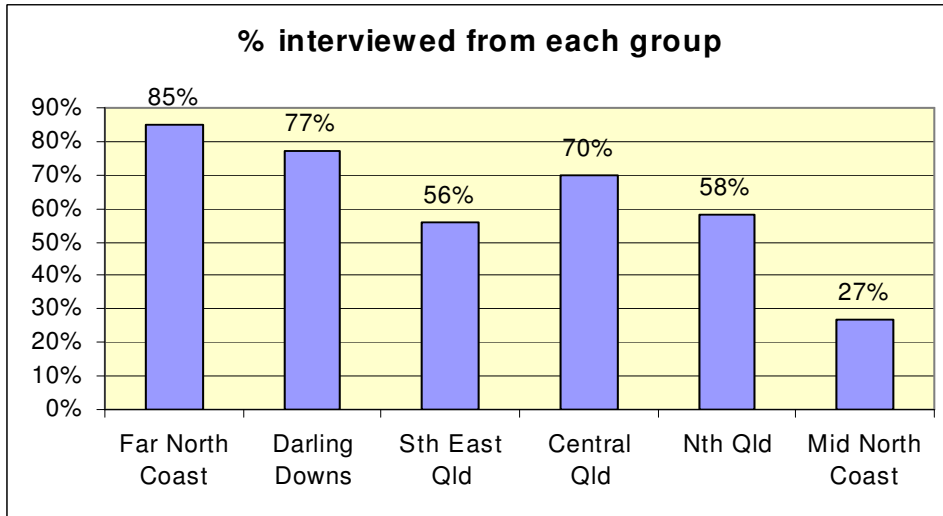


Figure 2. Location of respondents

The percentage interviewed from each group is shown in the graph below.



4.2.3 Regional group help with the management of the dairy enterprise

The first goal of the Subtropical Dairy Program is to build the capacity of people to manage their dairying enterprises in the subtropical region. Respondents were asked the extent to which being a member of a regional group had helped them to manage their enterprises. Respondents were asked to give a score between 1 and 5 (1=not at all, 5= a lot). The results are shown in Figure 3.

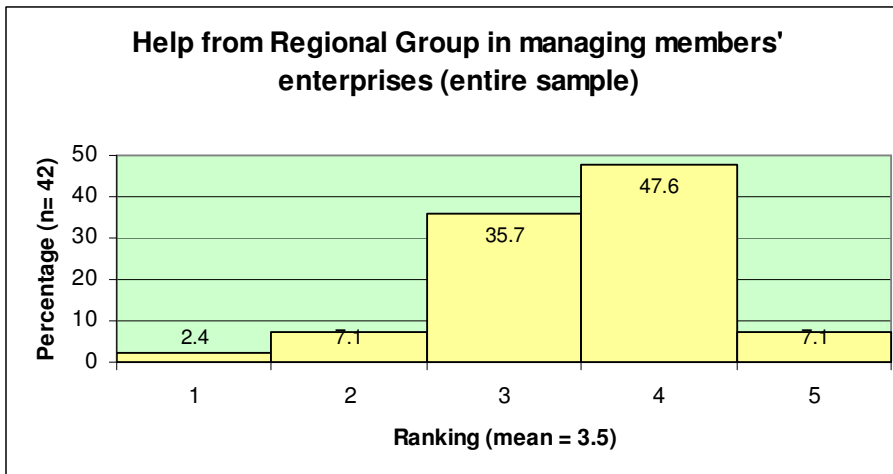


Figure 3. Ranking of regional group help in managing dairy enterprise

Respondents on average ranked the helpfulness of their Regional Groups at 3.5 out of 5 (similar to the results from 2005). Only one person found the regional group to be “not at all” helpful in managing his/her dairy enterprise.

There was no significant difference in the ranking assigned to individual regions (though there might have been a difference if a larger sample was interviewed from each group). The two highest ranking groups were North Queensland (mean of 3.8) and Far North Coast (mean of 3.67). Both of these groups had an average ranking above the average across all of the groups.

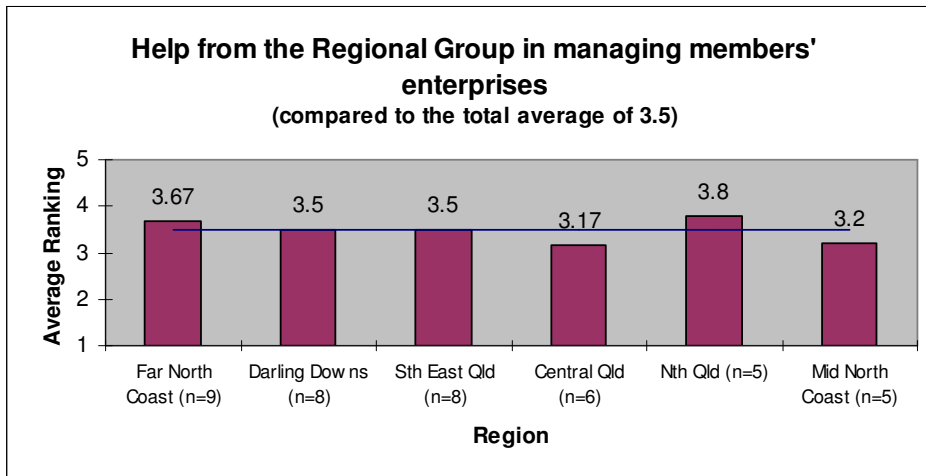


Figure 4. Ranking of regional group help in managing dairy enterprise – by region

Regional group members were then asked **how** their regional group had helped them manage their dairy enterprises. They were able to select from more than one of the following options:

- Support from others in the dairy industry
- Give support to others (e.g. through mentoring)
- Come across new ideas and ways of doing things
- Gain access to information
- Gain access to people who can help
- Other

Forty-five members responded to the question and the results are shown in Figure 5. The results indicate that, overall, members found the Regional Groups had been less helpful than they had in 2005, but more than in 2004. Overwhelmingly, the Regional Groups have been helpful in allowing members to come across new ideas and ways of doing things (93%) and to gain access to information (80%) and to gain access to people who can help them (80%). Of the respondents, 67% also believed that through their regional group they had received support from others in the dairy industry, and they had also given support to others.

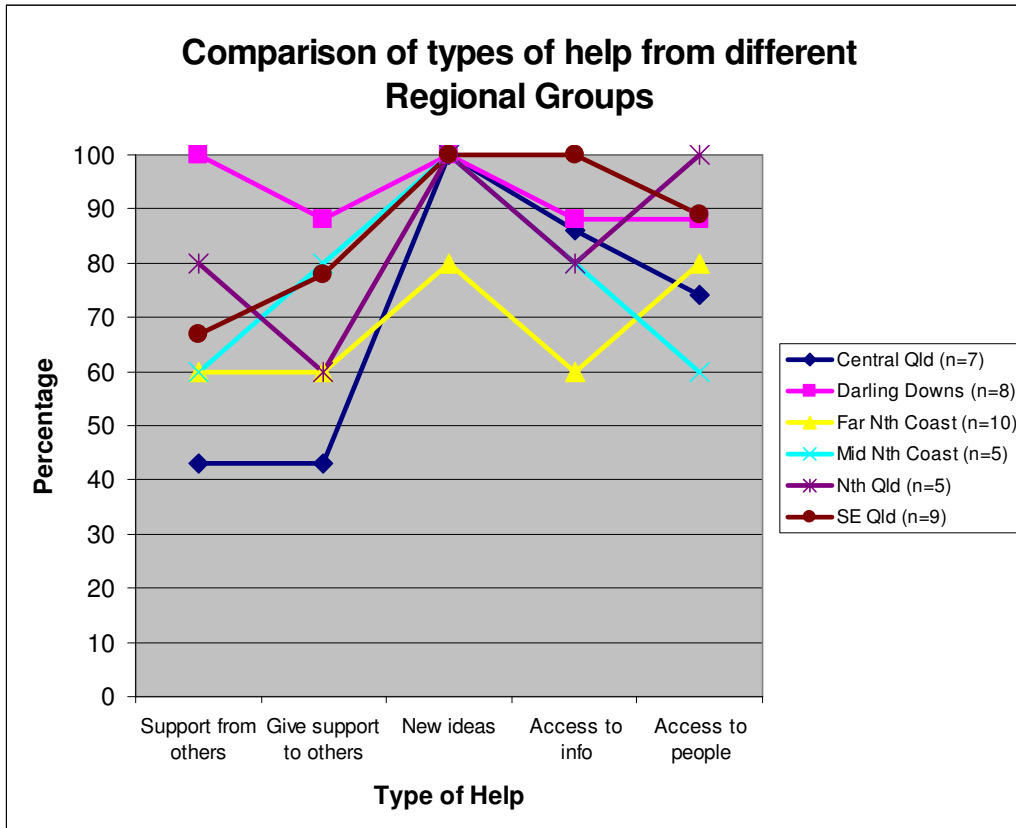


Figure 5. Type of help offered by Regional Groups

The results were also analysed individually for each regional group. The Darling Downs was rated as the most supportive group, with at least 80% of respondents indicating they received all of the types of support, and also that they provided support to others and 100% of group members indicating they had received support from others and new ideas. There was the most variation between groups in regards to whether members had received support from others. Less than half of the respondents from Central Queensland had received support from others in the dairy industry as a result of being involved in the group.

4.2.4 Level of involvement in Regional Groups or Subtropical Dairy

Members were asked to identify the nature of their involvement with the Regional Groups or SD. They were given the following options:

- I am an office bearer of the regional group/SD
- I help with the management of projects regional group/SD
- I help with the administration regional group
- Other

Of the 49 members who responded to this question, 25% indicated they were office bearers and 61% that they were involved with the management of projects. A further

37% noted they were involved with the administration of their regional group. Eighteen percent of respondents indicated they played other roles on behalf of their group.

These results are shown in Figure 6 below.

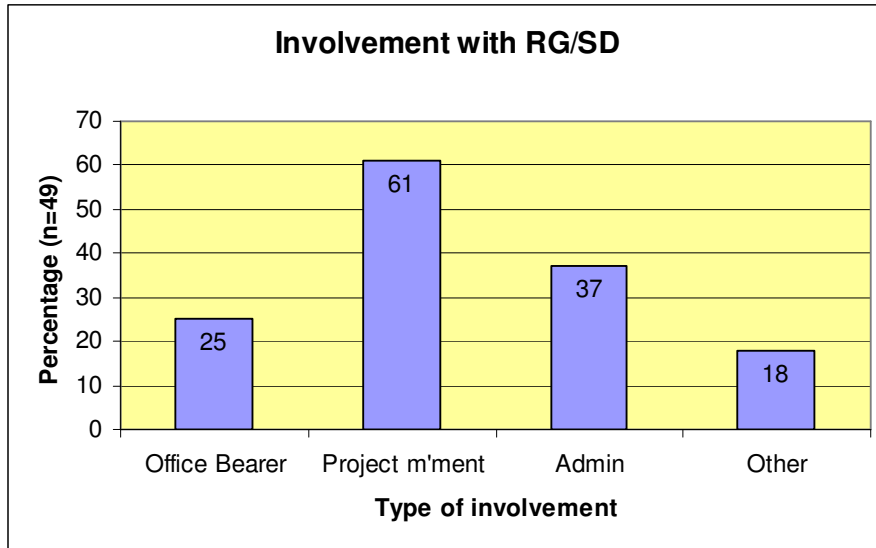


Figure 6. Type of involvement with regional group

4.2.5 Involvement in research

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they had become involved in research through the regional group. They were asked to rank their involvement on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5=a lot). Results from the entire sample, as well as results by region, are shown in Figure 7. The average score was 3.14. This was higher (though not significantly) than last year's average of 2.9.

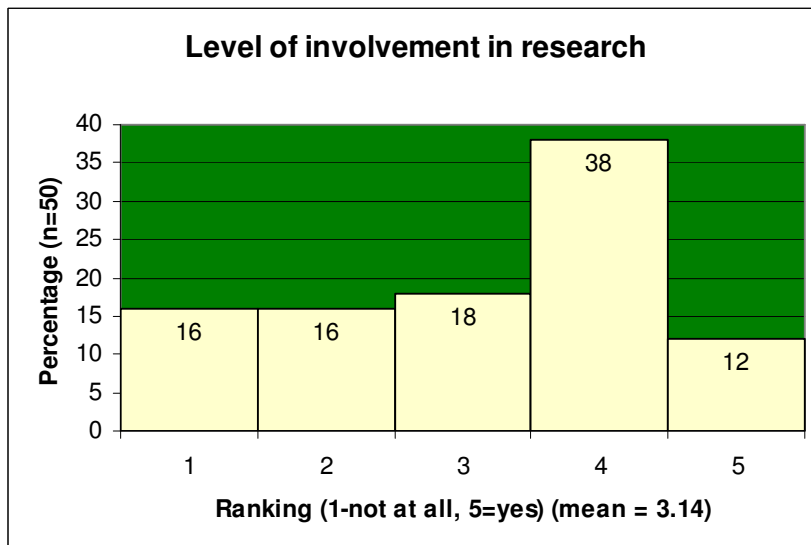


Figure 7. Level of involvement in research

The results show that 84% of respondents were involved at least to some extent in research (that is they gave a score of 2 or higher out of 5). This was an increase from the result of 73% from the 2005 evaluation. This indicates that more of the regional group members have been involved (at least to some extent) in research in the last twelve months than had been in the previous twelve months.

Respondents' level of involvement in research was examined in relation to their response regarding how much their regional group had helped them manage their dairy enterprise. A moderate positive correlation¹ of 0.583 was found between these two responses. This indicates that members, who are more involved in research, are more likely to believe they gain benefit out of involvement in their regional group. This was similar (though with a slightly weaker correlation) to the evaluation results for 2005.

Respondents' level of involvement in research was also analysed for each of the Regional Groups. The results are shown in Figure 8. The Regional Groups which most involved its members in research included Mid North Coast (3.7 out of 5), North Queensland (3.5 out of 5) and Far North Coast (3.4 out of 5). These results were quite different to last year. The Darling Downs group had increased its level of involvement of members in research from an average score of 2 out of 5 in 2005 to 2.8 out of 5 in 2006. The Far North Coast however, has decreased its involvement of members in research from an average score of 4.7 out of 5 in 2005 to 3.4 out of 5 in 2006.

¹ A correlation of 1 means that there is a perfect positive association between two variables, and a correlation of 0 means that there is no association between two variables.

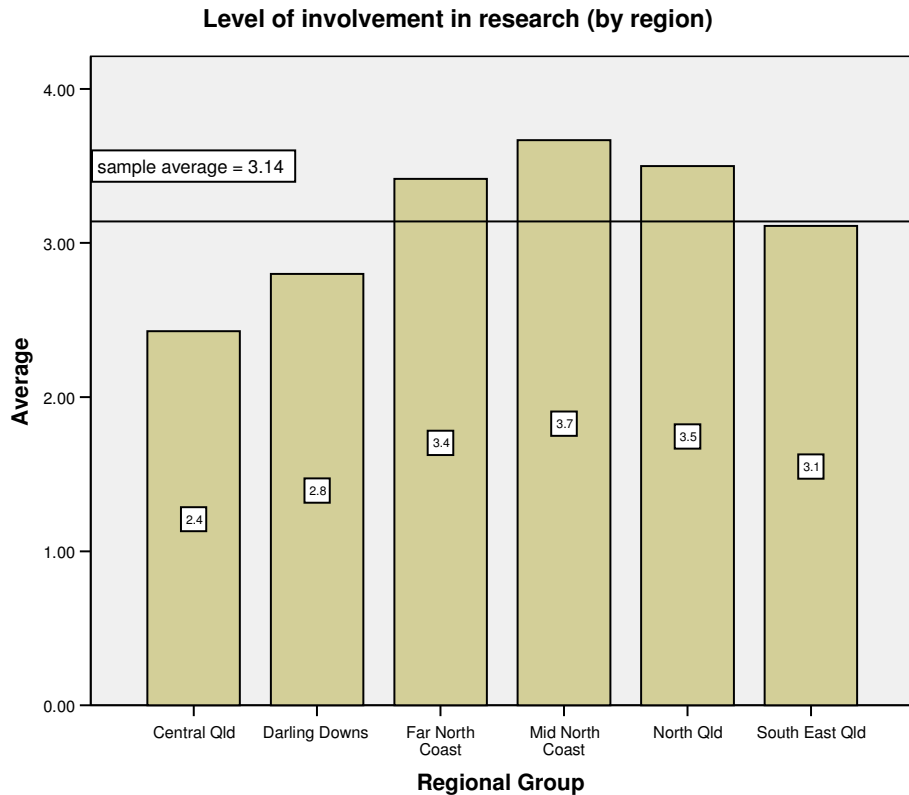


Figure 8. Level of involvement in research - by region

Comments from members indicate that the level of involvement in research varies from providing ideas and supporting research to being heavily involved with the trials themselves.

4.2.6 Changing the level of involvement in Regional Groups

Respondents were asked if there was anything they would like to change about their level of involvement in their regional group. The majority (67%) indicated that they were happy with their present level of involvement. Suggestions for change from individuals were:

- Share the office bearers among more farmers.
- Meet more often.
- Do something about the effect of distance
- There needs to be a clearer line of decision making in place.
- Have a wider range of farmers involved, rather than the same few

One person was disillusioned about the effectiveness of the regional group idea.

- Yes, I wish they'd scrap them. I think they were started to give farmers ownership over projects but I question how effective they are now. There's a lot of research out there and a lot of places to source information about that research - not sure that the Regional Groups are the best way to access that material.

4.2.7 Research and priorities

When asked how Regional Groups identify research ideas, the answer was that it was mainly through informal and formal discussion. Some (35%) had a formal structure for contacting other farmers before meetings for research ideas.

Priorities for research were usually arranged through informal, general consensus, although members from two Regional Groups stated that they voted on priorities.

Finally, respondents were asked how they felt the process of identifying and prioritising research could be improved. The problem of coming up with good ideas was mentioned several times. One person mentioned that ideas should be sorted into what:

- Is known already and results can be found on the internet
- Is already covered by programs such as the national projects (InCalf, Countdown Under)
- Can be researched on farm.

There were also several mentions about involving more farmers in the search for ideas but a process for this was elusive.

4.2.8 Links, networks and relationships with other organisations.

The third goal is about building positive relationships with organisations relevant to Subtropical Dairy such as government, industry and research organisations. Most regional group members mentioned that their membership had helped form these links if they were not already in place. Links occurred with organisations such as:

Government departments of agriculture and natural resource management
NRM bodies, Landcare
Local govt
NSW DAG. Also various private companies involved in dairying.
Milk processors
Universities and research organisations such as CQU, UQ (particularly the vet school). USQ, James Cook Uni, Wollongbar Research Station, Mudtapilly Research Station
Private personal contacts
DD young farmers' network
Dairy industry discussion groups
seed merchants
Dalby TAFE
NSW CSIRO
AgSolutions (we should probably do more on this one)
Dairy Industry Group, NSW
NSW FA, CRC Future Farm project
Dairy Australia.

4.2.9 Communicating the results of dairy projects

The fourth goal is to inform the dairy industry of the results of the projects carried out by Regional Groups and by Subtropical Dairy. Respondents were able to choose between:

- Newsletters
- Talking to other farmers at meetings
- Talking to other farmers informally
- “Other”

Many respondents who chose the “other” category explained that they had used media/advertisements (including web and mail), and field days. These responses were then separated into their own category. The results are shown in Figure 9. These results are similar to the trend observed in 2005 where the primary means of communication included talking informally to other producers (77%), newsletters (73%) and talking at meetings (73%).

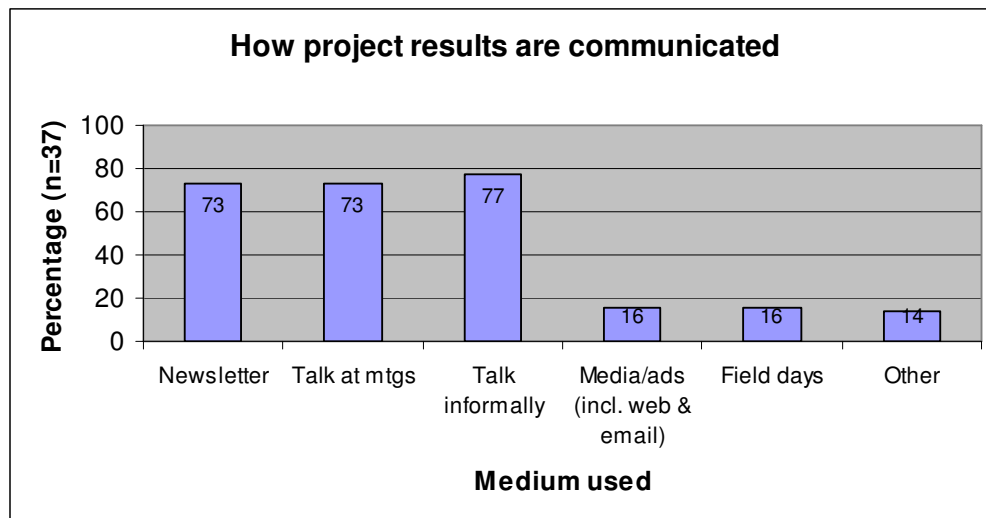


Figure 9. How project results are communicated to the wider dairy industry

The producers were also asked if they read the Northern Dairytimes, and if so, were the Dairy articles useful. Fifty-one producers responded to the question. Of these, 49 (96%) indicated that they read the Northern Dairytimes and they scored it an average of 4 out of 5 for usefulness. This newsletter is no longer produced and there is a clear indication that it should be replaced.

4.2.10 Regional groups help with the identification and achievement of goals

The fifth and last goal is to help dairy farmers in the subtropical region identify and achieve their goals. Respondents were asked whether being a member of the regional group had helped them identify and achieve their own goals. Forty-six members responded to the question. Of these, 37 (73%) indicated that their regional

group had helped them identify and achieve some or all of their goals. Probably the most telling reason was:

- We often come into contact with achievers in the industry, and being a board member you come into contact a bit more than usual with these types of people, they further motivate you.

Some of other comments were:

- We had a bad tick problem here for a while and through the regional group we were involved in a 2 day workshop on ticks. Since then I've got that problem under control.
- Exposure to new ideas and ways of doing things. Helped to build network of contacts to source help and info.
- Talking to farmers in other groups to find out different ideas to help my farm.
- Looking at new ways of doing things. Example is that I've been following the advances on direct drilling.
- Through participating in research that was relevant to me.
- Simply through brainstorming and being involved. It's helped me keep an open mind.
- Communication of current ideas.
- Improved management and techniques, but could do more.
- It has helped me because some of the things we've looked at in the group I've been able to implement. Mainly it's knowing those things are out there if you want to implement them.
- See other people's operation and how it works, then you can have a go yourself.
- Allowed collaboration with farmers resulting in farmer driven projects.
- Gives me a greater insight into different species that will grow in this area, what fertilisers we should be using to help these species grow, gives me a wider access to knowledge that's out there if I should wish to seek it. Has improved my networks. We interact with different milk processors, etc.
- Since being a member I have travelled overseas to NZ, USA and China looking for new ideas. The group being able to bring people into the area that are not usually available.
- Through having access to information and a network of contacts who can help or provide the information we need. Being involved in discussions with others helps us to find useful connections.
- At a professional level it has enhanced contact with people on the committee and through participating in activities like field days and farm walks. But these activities and contacts happen on a continuum and there is a lot of overlap between my work and the regional group activities.
- Kept up to date on current information which creates a positive atmosphere.
- It has put a structure in place for community stakeholder engagement for our primary business of R&D.
- Allowed better access to information and the projects going on. Also the chance to feedback in to the process.
- It's helped me understand what is happening in the industry and how the industry impacts on the local economy. I can get a sense of what people in the industry are doing. From a more indirect perspective, I have family members involved in the dairy industry and I am interested in dairy issues from this angle also.
- Most of the farmers who are involved with Regional Groups tend to be reasonably progressive. Good to talk to them and get ideas etc. I was able, by being involved, to learn what was going on. Also, being involved with some of the researchers, to be able to talk to them and get ideas.
- Communication and discussion with other members and professionals.
- Through providing support - shared concerns, questioning the way we do things.

4.2.11 Regional group goals

Members were asked whether their regional group had its own written goals. They were able to choose from yes, no or unsure. Forty-eight producers responded to the question. The results are provided for all respondents in Figure 10 and also divided into Regional Groups in Figure 11.

Of the respondents, 41% indicated that they knew that their group had written goals. This was an increase of 8% from 2005.

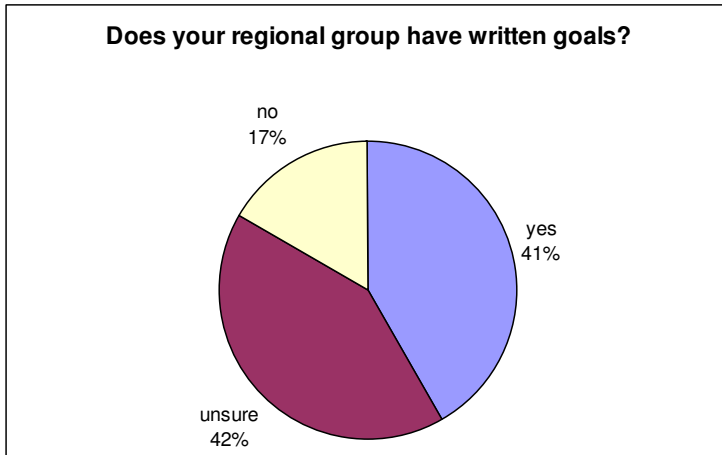


Figure 10. Regional group written goals

There was wide variation between the groups of how many members knew if their groups had written goals or not. For four of the six groups, less than half of their members indicated that their group had written goals. None of the members interviewed from Central Queensland indicated that their group had written goals. In contrast, over 60% of members from the Darling Downs indicated that their group did have written goals. Far North Coast had a 40% increase in the number of members who indicated that their group had written goals from 2005.

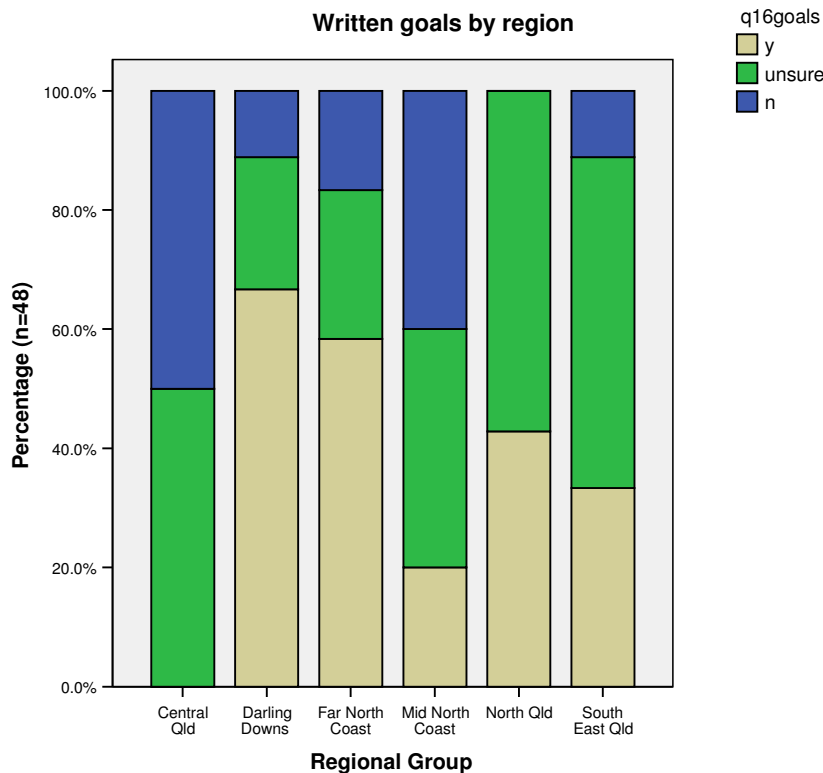


Figure 11. Regional group written goals - by region

Most regional group members were unsure about when their goals were last reviewed, apart from the Darling Downs group where goals were reviewed recently.

4.2.12 How can regional group operations be improved?

NB. The following section needs careful reading. There are many useful suggestions in here which, because of their volume could not be included in the recommendations.

Recurring themes with regard to improvement are:

The need for more representation from farmers – younger, different, workers
To meet more often such as through a telephone hook up
To have new or different chairpeople

Central Queensland

- Meeting more frequently would be good but there is a lot of distance involved. People are also busy. We met twice last year but that was only because we hosted the Annual Forum.
- I suppose having more meetings but that's unrealistic.
- In CQ distance is a problem.
- Distance in CQ makes it hard for group to frequently get together.

Darling Downs

- Last year our group was suffering, without purpose or direction. We called a crisis meeting to take us through that. I've noticed a vast improvement since that happened. We had to ask ourselves some hard questions. It's hard to see big results because we only meet 3/4 times a year.
- Would be good to get more young farmers, or even just workers in the industry, to attend meetings. They don't necessarily need to become members, but just to invite them as a guest. Proposed that last meeting for the year could be a Christmas celebration, open to all. Not just for them to learn, but interactive process - we need to hear what they want.
- Just from the last few meetings, we do struggle for time to have more discussion on what the group really wants to do. The reason for this is that we have a few reports to get through - DPI, QDO, Condamine Alliance, report on research. By the time we get through all of that, there's not much time to discuss our business. We've discussed having a timekeeper at the meeting, are trying to find a way that is acceptable to everybody. Reports do have useful information, though.
- We have implemented some changes and so far they seem to have made an improvement.
- Needs expanding to get extra people in, but with decline in industry it's going to become harder to get young people active. There are a number of committees that people are involved. Harder to get people involved when financially stretched.
- We've taken a knife to it and carved it open so we are currently looking at the way it works and improving it.
- More young farmer involvement.

Far North Coast

- Need more young farmers with new ideas and enthusiasm.
- Only by getting more farmers to take up the things we have achieved. It's very difficult - you can tell people, but getting them to accept knowledge is different.
- I think this industry struggles with the geographic spread of farmers. We are located in diverse regions and to have a meeting in the same venue over and over may make it impossible for some to attend, that is, if you have to travel 2-3 hours to get to a meeting at night, you're not likely to go. This is important because it needs the participation of all farmers, not just a select few.
- Having more members would help but they're not always out there.
- Would like to see more members and a bigger and wider participation. Not sure how you would achieve that though.
- It would be good to have more participation but as I said, apathy is high in the industry at the moment.
- We need to involve other farms in region.
- Keep getting new people involved.
- More farmers involved.

Mid North Coast

- I wish it was more inclusive. It's made up by a core body of people, not all of whom are dairy farmers, but although this group has tried on several occasions to get more regular attendees, that hasn't happened. It's a remnant from the days when there were dairy farmer groups in every valley. They've tried to keep things going but dairy farmers don't have so much spare time on their hands any more. There are a lot more dairy farmers up on the Dorrigo, although they're disappearing too, but they don't attend. Meetings are held at Urunga, which is central, but not as local. Very hard to improve it - can't belt people over the head. Even holding meetings on the Dorrigo hasn't worked.
- Get more farmers involved. Very difficult. On the Macleay it's difficult to get them involved.
- The problem I see is a lack of confidence in the industry.

North Queensland

- There was poor attendance at the last meeting which may have been due to short notice or other reasons. The problem these days is that people are so busy so maybe we need to look at encouraging membership and attendance through follow up phone calls for example.
- It is working well. It would be nice to receive meeting agendas a few weeks in advance of the meetings.
- May be need another meeting soon. Had one at the start of the year and not since. Cyclone may have stopped that. Usually meet 4 times a year.
- Need a new chairman.
- More stakeholder involvement. Good to have new blood in. This will continue with younger people coming in. Nothing wrong with the people on it.
- The group runs well and our meetings are effective. There are only around 90 farmers up here and we have a good network.
- It is an effective group with a good cross section of members including committed producers, the local vet, processor members and government representation.

South East Queensland

- Working presently at trying to introduce younger members to team, with some success. Some of us have been doing this since it started and we're getting old and tired. I'd rather see younger people come in and I could support them without having to drive it. We're looking to replace our chairman at present and it'd be far better for someone younger to step into the role.
- I suggested 12 months ago that we have 3 monthly phone hook-ups between 6 monthly meetings. That has happened. Distance makes it very difficult to contact otherwise. If there was someone who was really proactive on the group and had the time, I think it would be

good if they could do stuff like sending out emails and keeping contact up. But it comes down to someone having time and skills to do it.

- New chairman. Admin side of it has been proving difficult. We had a very good secretary who ceased dairying. We've toyed with idea of appointing a secretary who is not involved so much with research.
- Communication needs to be improved and a more strategic approach in terms of selecting and prioritising projects. I don't question the importance of having processes in place to help farmers identify their research needs but it needs to be refined.

Recommendations

Provide groups with a strategy to recruit new members (especially young farmers).

Most groups have asked for more meetings. One group has tried a teleconference with success. The Management Committee institute a policy where Regional Group members meet at least every three months and for as many meetings as appropriate to be by teleconference. It is usual for teleconferences to be scheduled for no longer than one hour.

Some groups have asked for a change in chair. A system of rotating chair has already been suggested. It is recommended that group members consider limiting the term of executive positions and that they change every year. This is to give all farmers experience in these positions as well as allowing the trial of different styles and ideas.

4.2.13 General Comments

Producers were asked if they had any general comments to make about their Regional Groups or Subtropical Dairy. Their comments are included below.

Positive comments

- Subtropical dairy has been a good thing for the industry. A lot of info has been generated. I suspect a lot of farmers have not taken advantage of or do not know about this info.
- Very worthwhile. Our regional group will start to show more results than we have in the past, just by going through processes of reflection I've mentioned. We've had good communication from the top down. SD has been very worthwhile.
- Have had a good relationship with Subtropical Dairy which I've enjoyed. Have picked up lots of good info to feed back to the group from them and other places such as industry meetings.
- The regional group is very active and wants to get things done for the local industry. My experience has been positive and the group is open to welcoming new members and farmers.
- On the whole I believe the group has worked successfully for a long time now.
- SD serves its purpose really well. Perhaps due to our geographical isolation I find that the bulk of the research is targeted at farms further south though.
- Wonderful idea. I'd like to be able to do tasks that I take on better than I do, but given limitations of distance etc, we're doing as well as possible.

Comments regarding concerns or suggestions

Research

- Hard to get Subtropical Dairy committed to serious research on dip resistant ticks.

- Could benefit from some kind of process to help farmers identify issues better, maybe somebody trained in facilitation.
- We are looked at by some farmers as a closed group.
- The one thing that concerns me is how aligned the SD research is with the research going on at the local DPI research station. There's been some concern in the past that the DPI research focus is more generic and I think it could be better aligned with issues that are relevant to local needs. If the DPI research was aligned with the local needs it would not only be more relevant but have more impact on the industry.
- Has to continue to find research projects that are of everyday relevance to farmers. They shouldn't get caught up in projects that are too narrow, just continue looking for the projects that can really help farmers on the farm.
- Both of them [Regional Groups and Subtropical Dairy] face a bit of an identity crisis - certain things have changed in the way that things are done in Dairy Australia and that trickles through to SD and the Regional Groups. You get to a point where you have to be sure that what you're doing is relevant, and have to be able to see far enough ahead to be able to change it.
- We're becoming more extension oriented, delivery of services, less research oriented. But the mechanism for research is still there. As we decline in numbers the strategies of reaching people will start changing too. Use of internet, emails will become more important. Concept behind that is that farmers will become seekers of advice rather than us taking it out to them.
- Make sure projects taken on are new and not just a re-hash of old information and make sure they are relevant in the present dairying climate.
- It can be hard to get farmers enthusiastic about going to the group and when you have a member leave, it can really impact heavily on the energy levels of the group. I also question the amount of energy that goes into preparing research applications in terms of the payback in profitability. These applications can take a lot of time and have a lot of people involved but is the energy investment worth the payback?
- Just for the groups to be focussed on the whole broad range of dairy farmers - some grazing, dry farming, irrigation, lot fed. Got to keep projects relevant for everybody.
- A lot of things are done to death, coming up with new ideas is hard. I was part of the M5 team, and it covered a lot of areas.
- The research funds seem to be disappearing and directed toward Victoria. That is because the funds are distributed by number of farms, and there aren't as many farms in this area now.
- This might open a can of worms. I don't think the amount of dollars that are being allocated to farmers to undertake their projects are the best use of the research funds. I think they'd be better used for raising farmer awareness and education about better farming standards but it is hard to do that at a high level with these funds for individual projects.
- I struggle with the relevance of what they deliver a bit. It's not clear to me that this sort of information isn't available in the commercial sector.
- Think that this grass roots type group is important because it is local enough to focus on what is important to local farmers - and research is important.

Operational processes

- We could do with a formal meeting process (maybe one per year) to renew goals.
- Needs to be more of a focus to get young people involved. A lot of these boards end up with guys who are there for years and years. Perhaps we need a limit on the number of years that people can hold office, a rotation of offices or something. Need a formalised transition for the next generation, to get people involved, getting them to meetings if not taking on responsibility.
- Our group is very forward thinking, very active. On a whole, I wish we had more communication between groups and projects.
- Am not impressed with the review system for projects that are put forward by farmers (relatively low dollar value projects). Nothing puts people off more than coming up with a new idea only to have it bagged or totally changed at the approval level. Perhaps this is related to the small amount of information that is included in the submissions for these small \$ value projects but the people on the review committees tend to act like gods.
- We on the mid north coast don't have that much in common with the Queensland mob.
- I would like to see SD bring in some of the best dairy farmers or advisors from overseas to give Australian farmers a few new ideas on dairying - not only from the USA as their system does not suit our grazing system. NZ dairy farmers are the best I have seen at producing milk and making money.

Future of the industry

- The Program is positive and I am comfortable with it. If I wasn't, I wouldn't be involved but I do think that even though it is a good program, it is not fully focused on the real world. We are

facing a dollar squeeze, all industries are. There is the rising cost of fuel, machinery and labour; our cost of production is just so high. I don't know if they are trying to save the industry through information but there is an information overload at the moment.

- Confidence in the industry is now making it more difficult to operate.

4.2.14 How regional group members look for information

Producers involved in Regional Groups use a range of media to access information.

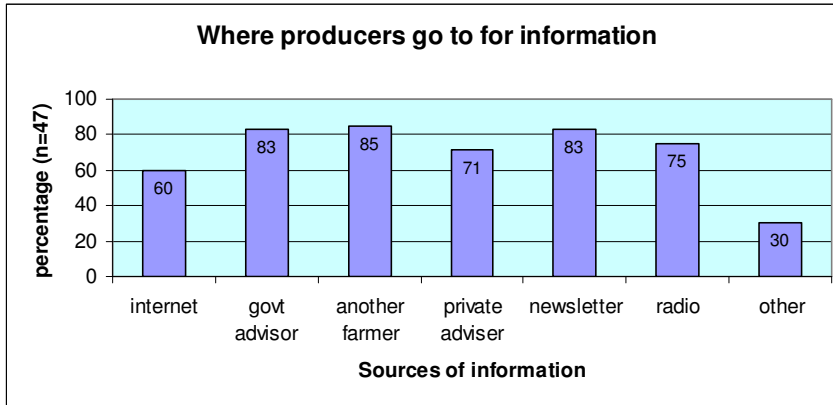


Figure 12 Where producers access information

The most common source used to access other information was from other producers (85%), followed by government advisors (83%) and newsletters (83%). However, more than half of the producers also gathered information from the radio (75%), private advisors (71%) and the internet (60%).

The producers were asked if they had broadband. Of the 46 producers who responded, the majority (74%) did not own broadband.

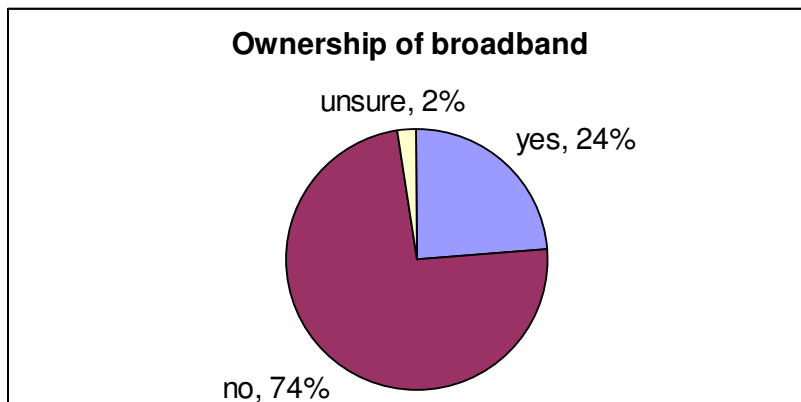


Figure 13 Ownership of broadband

4.2.15 Interest in training

Producers were asked if they were interested in attending training on how to use the internet. Of the 46 who responded, 41% (19) were interested in attending training. They also indicated the nearest government department of agriculture. Their responses are listed below.

Beaudesert (2 responses)	Kempsey
Biloela	Mudtapilly
Casino/Kyogle	Rockhampton (2 responses)
Coffs Harbour	Toowoomba (3 responses)
Gympie	Warwick
Kairi or Malanda	

4.3 Survey of Dairy community not directly involved with Subtropical Dairy

4.3.1 Summary

Individuals from the dairy industry in the subtropical region are surveyed to gauge their awareness of the Subtropical Dairy Program and what it does. The same survey was previously carried out in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004, and now in 2006. This report compares the results from these successive evaluations where appropriate. From this information an assessment can be made about the effectiveness of the communication process of the SD. The main messages that emerged from the survey were:

- Awareness and knowledge about SD is at an all time high. Over 70% of respondents in the 2006 survey had heard of SD.
- More respondents knew about SD than the Regional Groups. Just over 50% of respondents had heard of the Regional Groups however this was a 24% increase from 2004. Less than 15% of respondents knew the aims of a regional group, and less than 10% heard about the Regional Groups through newsletters or newspapers.
- The main issues for the respondents who were producers included the price of milk (38%), business management (27%) and pastures and feed (27%). Managing for climate change, environmental issues ticks were also mentioned by 19% of producers.
- There was an increase in the number of respondents who provided information to the SD from 2004. The most common way that respondents provided information to SD has been through discussion groups, followed by industry meetings, and lastly through Regional Groups.
- Respondents in 2006 believed that the SD program was effective in: providing information about projects, helping develop projects, helping them consider dairy issues, reflecting industry needs and helping to address dairy issues. This was an improvement from 2004.
- The Regional Groups were also considered to be effective in all of the roles listed above. There was a dramatic improvement in the effectiveness of the

Regional Groups to help develop projects from an average of 2 out of 10 in 2004, to 6 out of 10 in 2006.

- Compared to 2004, more respondents wanted SD to provide information about projects (60% of respondents in 2006), and to provide more information about the program (36% of respondents in 2006). Also in comparison to 2004, fewer respondents wanted SD to have a higher profile or to be a lobby group for the dairy industry.
- The most common media that respondents use to access information include newsletters and other producers.
- Approximately half of the respondents use a range of electronic means in their businesses, and the farmers in the sample were using more of these means than were the other stakeholders.
- Of the respondents, 91% have broadband internet access.

4.3.2 Who took part

Of the 50 respondents, 60% (30) were farmers not involved in Subtropical Dairy. The remaining respondents included DPI researchers, Queensland Dairy Organisation (QDO) executive members, UQ researchers and DPI field staff.

The trend in the number of farmers interviewed in each survey is shown in Figure 14. The proportion of producers in the sample in 2006 was similar to the 2002 survey, but 14% less than in the 2004 survey. The changing demographic of respondents should be taken into account when interpreting the data.

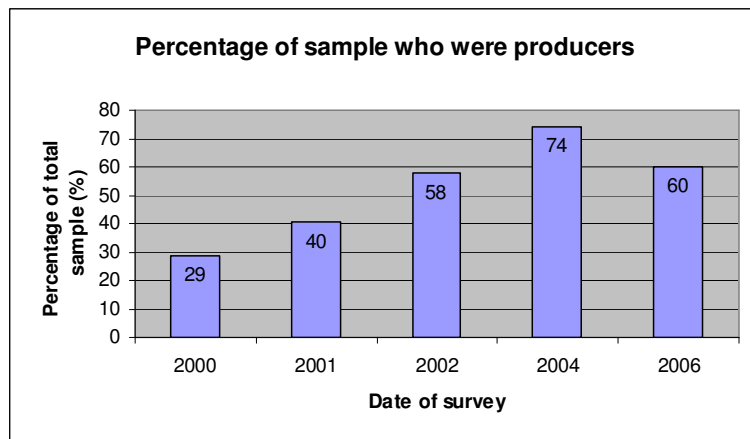


Figure 14. Farmers taking part in the survey

The stakeholder groups represented by the remaining 20 respondents are shown in Figure 15. In 2006, other than farmers, the stakeholders represented included DPI researchers (10), QDO executive members (4), UQ researchers (3) and DPI field staff (3).

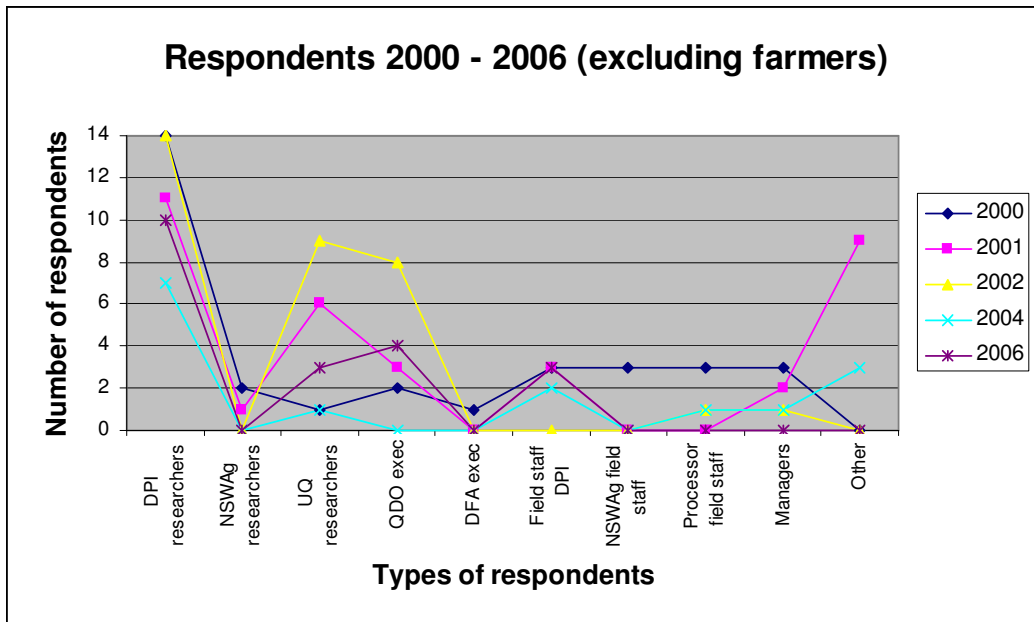


Figure 15 Composition of outsiders survey (excluding farmers)

4.3.3 How much was known about Subtropical Dairy

In 2006, 72% of respondents had heard of SD. This was the highest level of awareness about the program that has been recorded in any of the surveys, and a 20% increase from the next highest result which was recorded in 2001.

The respondents' knowledge of SD was in all areas, greater than in 2004, and in most cases, for the previous years as well. Of the respondents in 2006, over 60% knew a committee member involved in SD, 48% knew the program aims, 50% had read about the program in newsletters, and 26% had read about the program in newspapers. Six percent of the respondents in 2006 had previously been a committee member involved in SD which was similar to the results found in 2000, 2001 and 2004.

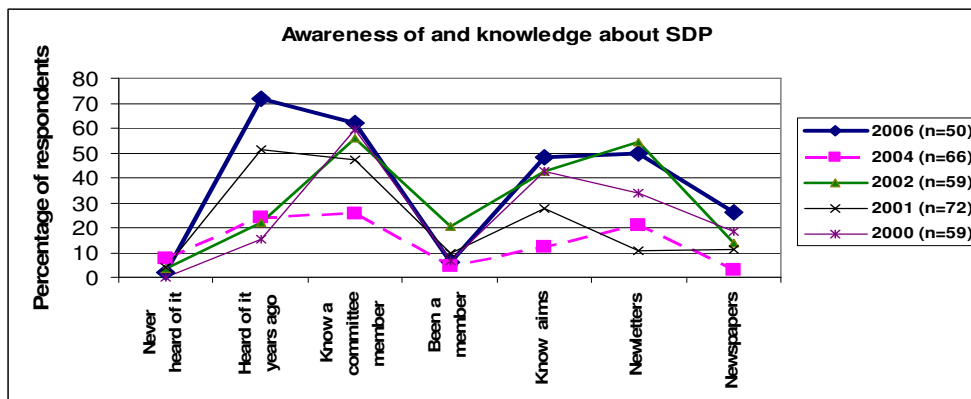


Figure 16. Knowledge and awareness of SD

4.3.4 How much was known about the Regional Groups

In 2006, 52% of respondents indicated they had heard of the Regional Groups before. This was 23% more respondents than the previous highest awareness level recorded in 2001. As in 2004, most respondents knew the difference between the Regional Groups and the SD.

The percentage of respondents who knew a committee member (28%), knew the aims of the Regional Groups (14%), and had heard about the groups through newsletters (8%) and newspapers (4%) were similar to the results recorded in 2004, and lower than the results from both 2001 and 2002 (see Figure 17).

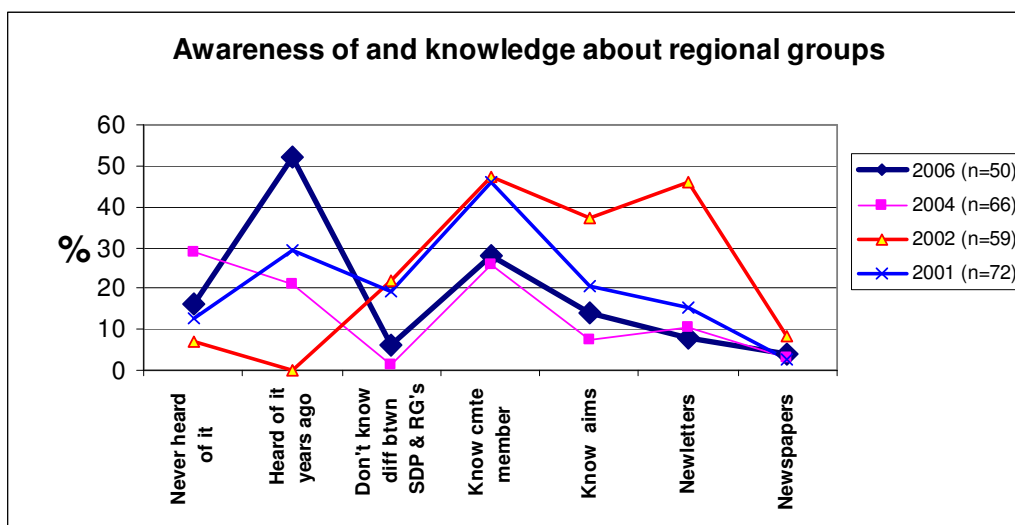


Figure 17. Awareness and knowledge about Regional Groups

4.3.5 Concerns and issues facing the dairy industry that Subtropical Dairy can influence

Respondents were asked what they believed were the main needs, concerns and issues facing the dairy industry that the SD could influence. The results were analysed separately for producers, and for the other respondents.

Producers

For the twenty-six producers who responded, the most common need, concern or issue raised was the price of milk. This was mentioned by 38% of producers. The next two most common responses related to business management (27%) and pastures and feed (27%). Managing for the drought and climate change was a prominent issue mentioned by 19% of the producers, as were other environmental issues such as natural resource management, and Environmental Management Systems (also 19%). Of the producers, 19% also mentioned herd health, with all but one referring specifically to managing ticks.

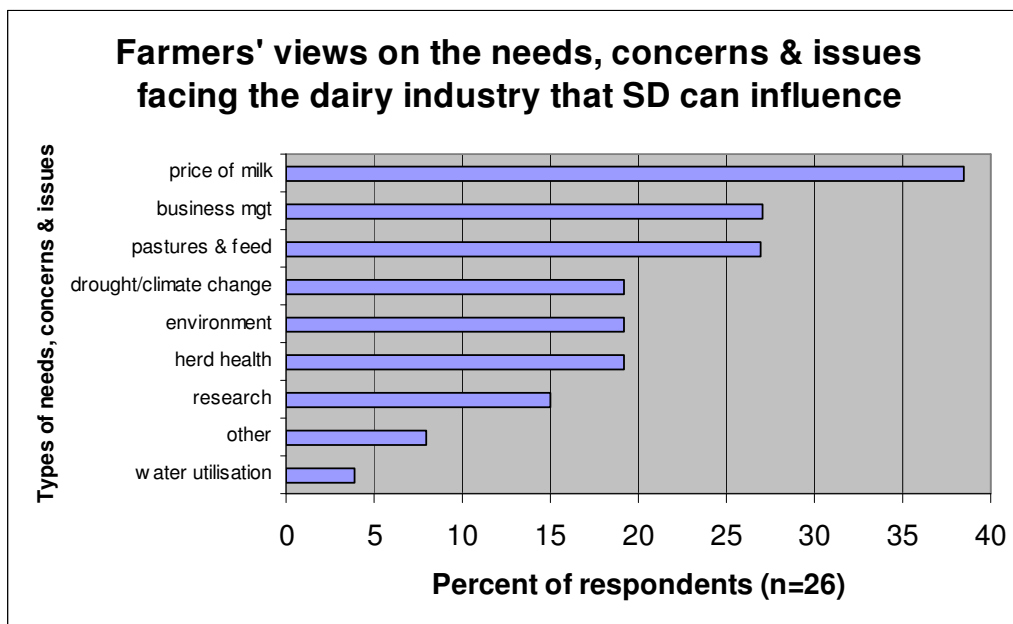


Figure 18 Needs, concerns & issues that SD can influence

Other respondents

Researchers were primarily interested in issues relating to business management, and field staff and QDO executive members listed a range of issues.

Table 1 Issues, needs and concerns raised by non-producers

Industry Category	Dairy Industry Issues
<i>Research staff (UQ and QDPI)</i>	<p><i>Business management and production (12 respondents)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profitability of the dairy industry in drought • Nutrition management (3 responses) • Farm economics and production systems in Queensland • Need to be more focused on issues that will result in more return for the \$, i.e. feed based issues and nutrition may lead to better return over research on external parasites. • Viability and water use efficiency • Improving profitability • The economic sustainability of the industry is most pressing issue. Can SD support farmers through this difficult period? • Property herd size, tropical pastures and feed • Supply management and business skills. Improving the ability of producers to work within regulatory frameworks relating to drug use and disease control. • Water management and drought tolerant stockfeed • Selection of appropriate genotypes and reproduction • Improving reproductive rates and oestrus detection
	<p><i>General comments (6 respondents)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research (3 responses) • Building skills and knowledge of producers (2 responses) • Pricing (1 response) • Animal welfare and environmental issues (1 response) • Building confidence in the industry (1 response)

<i>Field staff (DPI and processors)</i>	<i>General comments (3 respondents)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue overseeing and sponsoring the programs with DA • Fodder • Providing a positive outlook for the industry, saying this is a good industry, and why people should join it • Continued support of research and extension • Cost of production, i.e. feed costs, fuel costs, labour costs • Attracting and keeping labour
<i>Executive QDO</i>	<i>General comments (4 respondents)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass species • Parasite programs • Cost of production in the tropics • Breeding philosophies; cross breeding • Effects of heat stress • Pricing

4.3.6 Providing information about these needs, concerns and issues to Subtropical Dairy

The way in which respondents in 2006 provide information about needs, concerns and issues to the SD follows a similar pattern to the results from 2001 and 2002, but quite different to 2004 (see Figure 19). Of the respondents, 24% do not provide any information to SD regarding their needs and concerns (this was a decrease of 28% from the 50% of respondents who did not provide information in 2004).

Of the respondents, 26% provide information through Regional Groups, 24% through industry meetings, and 30% through discussion groups. These results were lower than those recorded in 2001 and 2002, but higher than the results from 2004. Of respondents, 22% used other avenues to provide information to SD. Some examples are listed below:

- research groups (4 responses)
- DPI management (2 responses)
- field days (2 responses)
- talking to other farmers (2 responses)

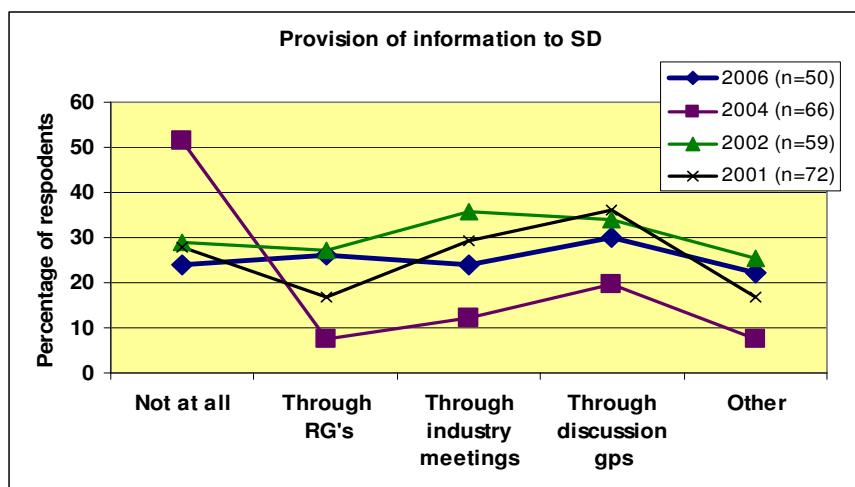


Figure 19. Provision of information to SD

4.3.7 Effectiveness of Subtropical Dairy

Over the five years surveyed, in general, the respondents' perception of the effectiveness of the SD has remained relatively constant (although there have been some moderate changes from year to year). In 2006, the ratings of effectiveness for all aspects of SD were 5 out of 10 or higher. This indicates that respondents, on average believed that SD had been effective. Respondents thought that SD had been more effective in 2006, than in 2004 for all aspects, except for the help SD had provided respondents to consider dairy issues.

As with previous years, the aspect of SD that was considered most effective was its ability to help the respondents consider dairy issues (6.03 out of 10). Similarly to the results in 2002, in 2006, the ratings of effectiveness, on average were similar for all aspects of SD.

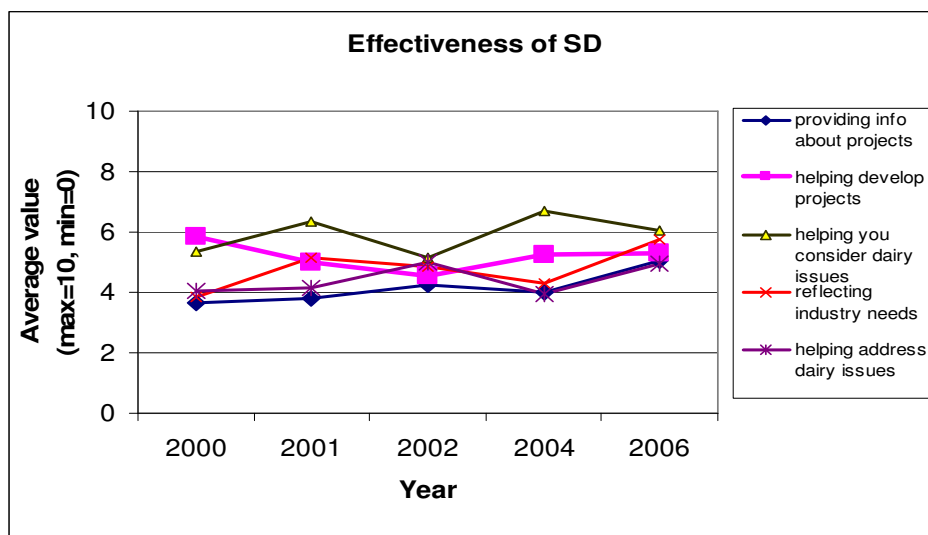


Figure 20 Effectiveness of SD²

4.3.8 How effective the regional group has been

Similar to the results for the SD, in 2006, the ratings of effectiveness for all aspects of the Regional Groups were 5 out of 10 or higher. This indicates that respondents, on average believed that SD had been effective for all for the aspects under question.

These results were an improvement on those for 2004 for all aspects of Regional Groups except for whether they reflect industry needs (this result decreased from 6 to 5). In particular, there was a dramatic improvement in the effectiveness of the Regional Groups to help develop projects from an average of 2 out of 10 in 2004, to 6 out of 10 in 2006.

² In the questionnaire, respondents used a scale from very effective (=10), effective (=5), ineffective (=0). Respondents who were not in a position to comment (i.e. marked not used/not relevant/unsure were left out of the sample.

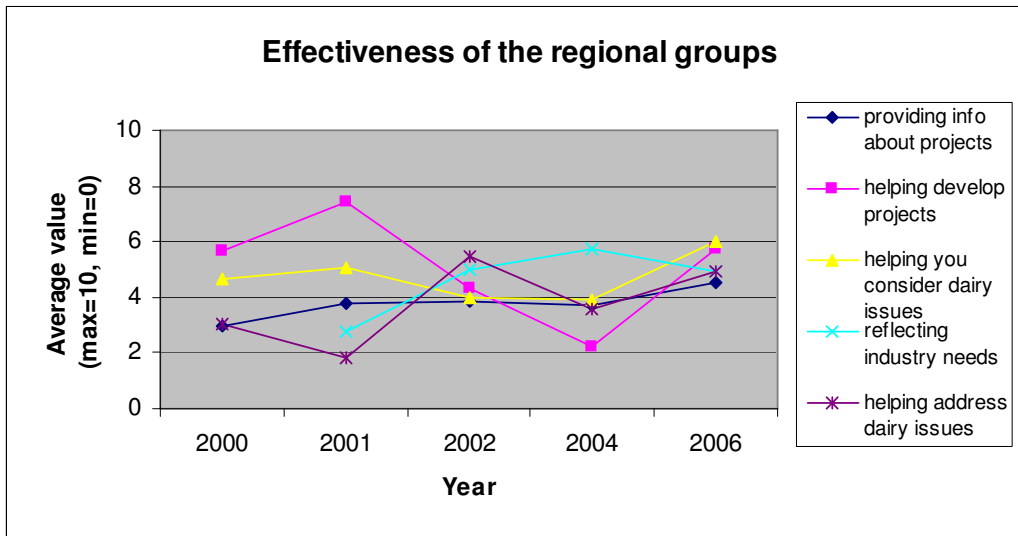


Figure 21 Effectiveness of Regional Groups³

4.3.9 What Subtropical Dairy can do better in the future

In 2006, 60% of respondents wanted SD to provide more information about projects, and 36% wanted SD to provide more information about itself. This was an increase of approximately 17% from 2004. In 2006, 24% of respondents wanted SD to be more of a lobby group for dairy community issues (see Figure 22), and 40% wanted a higher profile. These results were lower than that recorded in 2004.

Across the years that respondents external to the SD and Regional Groups have been surveyed, there are different trends in the desires for the future activities of SD. Since 2001 there has been a gentle, but steady decline in the number of respondents who think that SD should act as a lobby group (from over 50% in 2001, to 24% in 2006). Several respondents commented that they believed that lobbying was the responsibility of QDO, that enough people were already doing this, and that if SD did get involved in lobbying, then they should do it in conjunction with QDO so that the messages did not contradict. One respondent who did think that SD should get involved in lobbying explained the focus should be 'just for research'.

³ Note: no data for "reflecting needs of industry" for the year 2000.

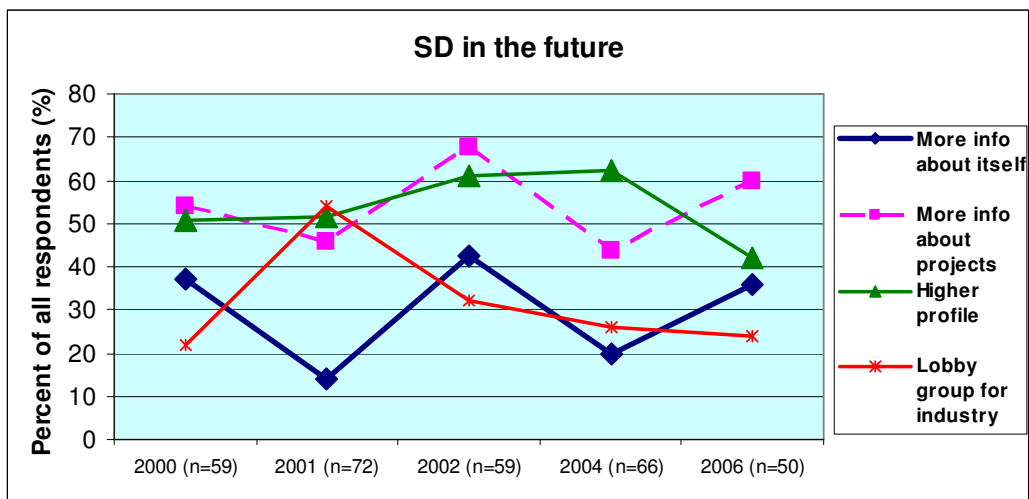


Figure 22. Improvements that can be made to SD in the future

Twenty respondents also made other suggestions for what SD could do better in future. Primarily, these related to communication to farmers, and also to researchers.

Communication (9 responses)

- Better communication with farmers to let them know what they do and what is out there for farmers. (3 responses)
- Inform producers of emerging issues in the industry.
- Better communications about projects as well, not just presenting what research has been done but WHAT it was done and WHAT was found - explaining the results.
- Better marketing of what they do and how they are available to help people.
- The most important thing for researchers would be to get regular updates and information from them about what the major concerns and issues are and perhaps to rank their importance. This way we could focus our research in areas that would feedback into their program. A more coordinated approach to research and information sharing.
- To improve communications with industry about research and to simplify these communications channels.
- Would be very interested in more information on cost effective farming techniques and new research on European breeds.

Involvement (3 responses)

- I'd like to see a better process for inviting members onto the board.
- They are disconnected from the state organisation. We all need to work together.
- A higher profile would get more information out about their projects. I think they've always tried to have a practical focus and they need to be a practical group for farmers. Getting farmers involved in this way is also a way to get them involved in governance issues.

Profile (3 responses)

- Particularly having a higher profile within the research community.
- Could raise profile by having speakers at regional field days to tell farmers what they do
- Higher profile especially with farmers.

Research (2 responses)

- A clearer process for research would be helpful. There doesn't seem to be any process in place with regards to research projects.
- Look into other areas of research. I don't think there has been sufficient research on the use of alternative breeds in terms of better managing heat, pests and breeding.

Other (2 responses)

- Regional Group for this area could be more active.
- The dairyinfo.biz website is not kept up to date, needs more funding.

4.3.10 Where do they go to find information

The two most common sources of information for these stakeholders were newsletters (48%) and other farmers (46%). Other sources of information included government advisors (32%), private advisors (30%), the internet (24%), radio (12%) and the dairyinfo.biz website (8%). These results are shown in Figure 23.

Other sources of information included:

- Australian Dairy Farmer magazine
- Books, meetings and conducting my own on farm experiments
- Contact Phil Chamberlain directly, or through DPI supervisor
- Journals such as the breed society journal
- QDO faxes every Friday

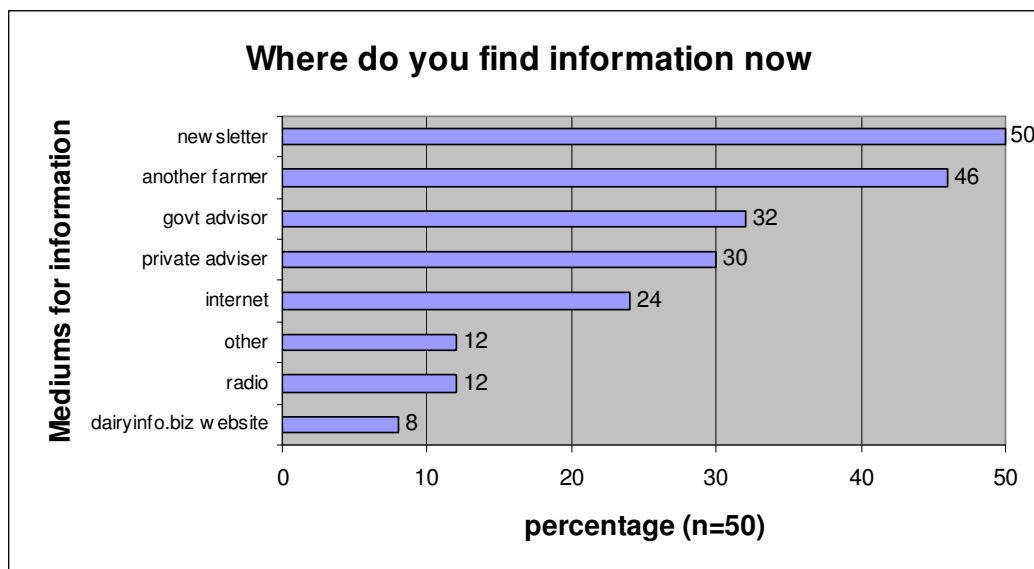


Figure 23 Where do respondents find information?

4.3.11 Use of electronic means in businesses

The respondents' use of electronic means in their businesses was analysed for the total sample, and also separately for producers. The results are displayed in Figure 24.

Of the respondents, 51% use internet search services, 44% use email and electronic accounting software, 35% use electronic banking and 26% use electronic herd management software.

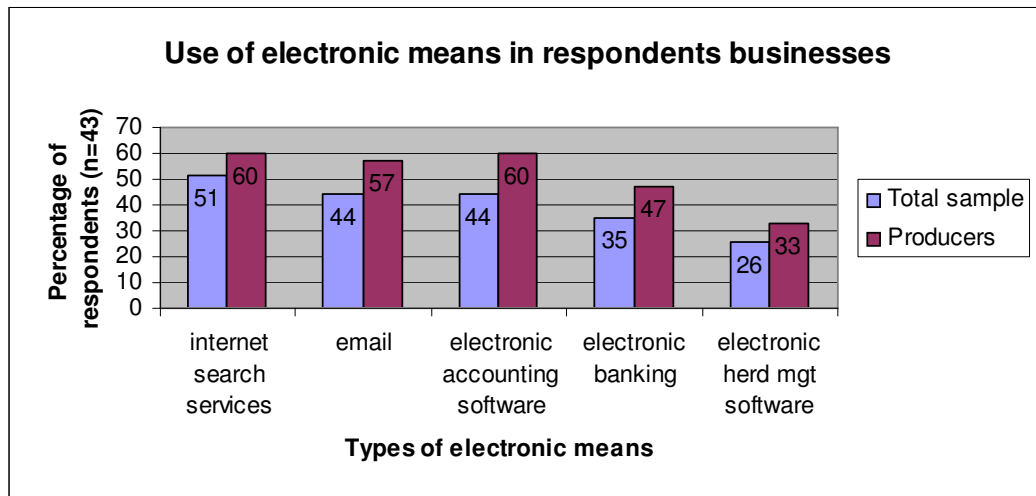
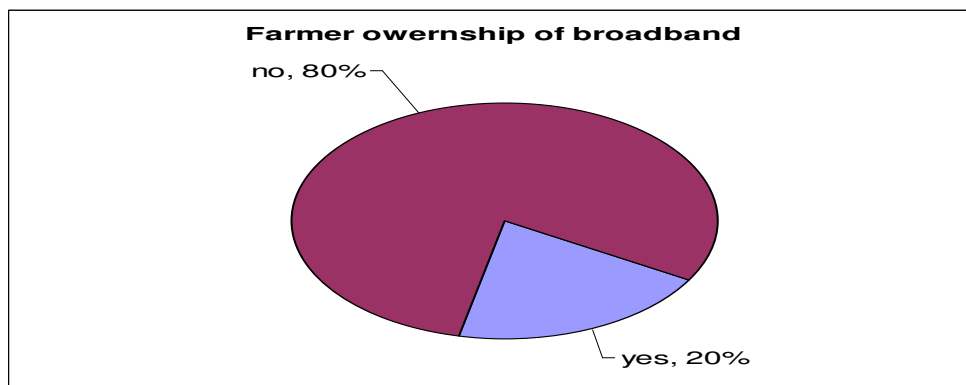


Figure 24 Use of electronic means in businesses

Respondents were also asked if they used the internet, did they own broadband, 20% of farmer respondents used broadband.



4.4 Evaluation strategy for the Management Committee

An evaluation of the process used by the Management Committee is carried out each year to see that the Committee is still effective and efficient. Activities were divided into those that dealt with the Committee and those that dealt more broadly with the operation of Subtropical Dairy. Data were collected from reports and the MC minutes.

Subtropical Dairy is a complex organisation to manage and becoming increasingly so now with having staff to manage as well. It is imperative that the efficient management of this organisation continues.

4.4.1 Operation of Subtropical Dairy

Members of the Management Committee were assigned to each regional group to contact them prior to a MC meeting to ask about:

- Research priorities or interests;
- The level of satisfaction of regional group members with the actions of Subtropical Dairy; and
- The level of benefit of Regional Group members of the involvement with Subtropical Dairy.

Research priorities or interests

Minutes of meetings of SEQ and Darling Downs were available for scrutiny for this evaluation and SEQ minutes showed that the regional group members were still contributing ideas as a normal part of the meeting process. Darling Downs had a special meeting to generate ideas and these were presented at the Annual Forum.

The issue of recording ideas was first raised in the evaluation report for 2000 and the recommendation then was to record ideas in the minutes and these are then noted by the Management Committee. Two further activities also list ideas. The first is through a question asked every two years to the “outsiders” survey and the second is through a facilitated discussion process at the Annual Forum. A third, but more informal, method is through the regional group feedback that Management Committee members collect.

By far, the most comprehensive is recording ideas through the minutes of regional group meetings although this is becoming less used. This may need to be reinstated because it is a very efficient method of collection. What some Groups do is each member contacts three other farmers with a simple set of questions like these from the questionnaire that is used:

The areas where we have done work in the past are:

*Pastures – what grows best where
Alternative and better feed
Lameness
Mastitis in heifers
The use of native grasses
Managing on farm labour*

1. *Do you have issues in any of these areas?*
2. *What are the main issues to do with dairying on your farm?*
3. *Are there problems would you like researched?*
4. *Are there other questions that you would like answers for?*

Group members have used these questions as a guide only and put them into their own words. SEQ still uses this process with effect.

Recommendation

That members of each regional group institute a process where they ask dairy farmers not in the group for research ideas and needs and record these and their own ideas in the minutes of their meetings so that they can be listed by the Management Committee.

The level of satisfaction of regional group members with the Subtropical Dairy

There is now a consistently high level of satisfaction with the management of Subtropical Dairy by the Regional Groups.

The level of benefit of Regional Group members (and others) of the involvement with Subtropical Dairy

Having a system that monitors the relationship with the Regional Groups is working well in the main although while this process is picking up that there are some needs (such as the significant issue brewing with the NRM staff, the Burnett Group wanting help, Central Queensland having problems with regular contact), which follow up action does not seem to flow through. The fact that Far North Coast had issues with their project development process did not register. There are still issues in some groups to do with entrenched chairs and not meeting often enough that need resolution by the Management Committee. Subtropical Dairy faces these significant challenges and while it is not always expected that the Management Committee resolve them, it can help.

Suggestions for the resolution of some of the issues have been put forward. They are:

Revitalising the Burnett Group – provide funds to the Burnett Group to distribute an invitation via tanker to all dairy farmers in the region to attend a lunchtime or evening BBQ. The aim is for dairy farmers to get to know each other and to provide research ideas to the Regional Group. No other obligation will be canvassed at this event. The reconstitution of the Group can be discussed at another time if it is still of interest. Nita Anderson still needs to be contacted for her approval for this move. Invitation to be written and multiple copied for distribution by the Management Committee.

Chairs of Groups – given that Regional Groups are funded for the learning of their members, the Management Committee should institute a policy of rotating the chair at least every year so that all members of the Group have experience running the Group.

Regular and frequent contact of members with each other – the Management Committee institute a policy where members need to meet at least every three months and for as many meetings as appropriate to be by teleconference. It is usual for teleconferences to be scheduled for no longer than one hour. This should be a course of action adopted by all groups even where members live in close proximity. It is a convenient means of contact because members do not have to leave home. It has already been tried by

the SEQ Group and found to be successful once a proper system was put in place.

Project development within FNC Group - issues such as the problem of project development within the Far North Coast Group that surfaced as a communication problem between that Group and the Management Committee will be resolved internally without any intervention needed by the Management Committee.

NRM staff - no resolution has been put forward at this stage about how that issue will play out. A mediation between all parties may provide an answer.

Recommendation

The Management Committee still faces some important challenges to resolve on behalf of Subtropical Dairy such as those to do with the NRM staff. A process outside of the normal meetings maybe needed for their resolution.

The Management Committee to organise for an invitation to be written and distributed to the Burnett regional dairy farmers inviting them to a BBQ to meet each other and share ideas about research once this move has been approved of by the Burnett Regional Group.

Given that Regional Groups are funded to promote the learning of their members, the Management Committee institute a policy of rotating the chair at least every year so that all members of the Group have experience and learn how to run a Group. This is particularly important for the younger members.

Dairy Australia has developed a statement on key performance indicators for its Regional Development Programs (see Appendix 1). This document will need to be incorporated into the evaluation process when ratified by the Management Committee. Means of doing this will need to be agreed on and probably best done through discussion with the evaluation and communication sub committee.

Recommendation

The Management Committee incorporate into the evaluation process the Dairy Australia statement on RDP key performance indicators when ratified by the Management Committee.

4.4.2 Operation of Management Committee

Operations of the MC

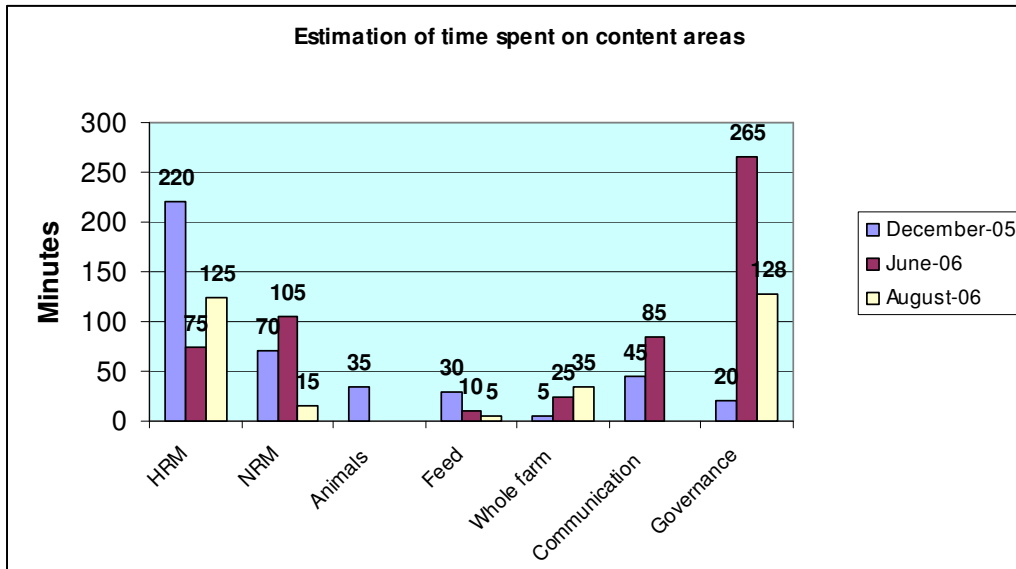
Monitoring of the process and content of the meetings of the Management Committee has worked well. There is broad agreement from members of the Committee that the process has become more efficient.

To make the resolution of issues more effective and efficient, the person responsible for the monitoring process should ask at the end of each meeting if there were important issues not being addressed or being put off for too long (such as the revitalisation of the Burnett Group). If this is the case, then the next question needs to be about resolution and if a process outside of normal meeting procedure needs to be used to resolve the issue.

With regard to the content on which MC meeting time is spent, the graph below clearly shows what matters to people and governance issues have dominated the agenda in the past year. The comment was made by the “content keeper” that “I also feel the group is going through quite a change process at present and I think HRM and Governance is where we do a lot of this change process”. Time spent on the human resources portfolio does not include time spent on discussing the projects of the Regional Groups (which would normally come under this umbrella).

It seems clear that issues such as resolving staffing matters to do with the NRM coordinators and general governance took time. The feed base and animal portfolios have large and specific projects attached to them such as the tick control project, the Farmlots projects. These do not always generate reports and this could account for there not being a lot of time spent in these areas. The HRM portfolio covers all activities such as the Situation and Outlook Workshop and the continuous improvement proposal put up by one of the members. Discussion about the Annual Operating Plan took time in the June meeting as did the presentation of an NRM report.

To ensure that time is spent as intended in the various portfolios and that the research ideas align with what is carried out, an annual review could be useful. The best time to carry this out would be at the time of the annual review of the operating plan. A process that looks at theories of change could be used (see attached).



Recommendation

To ensure that on going and important issues are discussed and resolved effectively, the person responsible for monitoring the meeting process asks about or points out at the end of each Management Committee meeting the issues that need resolution.

At the next review of the operating plan, the Management Committee assess its theory of change as part of the review process. That to ask the question whether the current theory about what will bring about desired change

4.5 Evaluation of the portfolios

The five portfolios associated with Subtropical Dairy are managed on a volunteer basis by people who are strong in those fields. These people are:

Feed systems management: Glen Chopping
 Animal management: Bill Tranter
 Whole Farm Management: Cameron Whitson
 Natural Resource Management: Bron Ford
 Human Resource Management: Kate Roberts

The questions that are asked of each portfolio are:

1. What are the objectives for the portfolio?
2. What are the projects associated with each of the objectives?
3. How are they contributing to the achievement of SDP goals?

4. What difference are these projects making to subtropical dairying through the extension of results?
5. What are issues facing this portfolio?
6. What is being done to address these issues?

The manager of Subtropical Dairy was asked if he would provide data against these questions given that he has the best overview of the portfolios.

4.5.1 Feed Management

Goal

By 2010, 100% of farmers involved in the implementation and management of feed systems that are sustainable (socially, economically and environmentally).

Objectives

- Identify and encourage adoption of practices to improve sustainability of feed systems.
- Improve the development & availability of more efficient grasses, legumes and crops.
- Improve the availability and efficient use of supplements within feed systems.
- Facilitate the development and uptake of extension products and packages that enhance farmers' ability to improve the sustainability of feed systems.

Projects

1. DAQ10785 – M5 Mutdapilly Farmlets
 - 6000-9000L/cow at 1.4 - 4.3 cows/ha
 - ROA 1 – 14%
 - Top 25% - \$602 Dairy Operating Profit/cow and 5.2% ROA
 - 70 Farm notes proposed – 13 already available
 - Dairy Predict calculator available
2. DAQ10949 – Development of sustainable quality warm season tropical legumes
 - Good quality arachis seed available
 - Reduces Nitrogen requirement but maintains or increases production
 - Difficult to get large productive areas quickly (seed costly & slow establishment)
 - Technical manual and Technical notes now available
3. TopFodder – better fodder conservation methods and strategies
4. Nutrition Plus
 - Will increase dairy farm profitability by 5% in S.D Region
 - Nutrition course for farmers

- Advanced nutrition course available for farmers and Service Providers

5. Forage Plus

- One or the next generation of projects
- Builds on previous projects
- Aim to increase production & utilisation of forage
- Improved knowledge & skills
- Development of additional techniques & technologies

6. Protein Plus

- Increased average milk protein by 0.15%
- Financial benefit to SD \$6M - \$8M per year
- Clear ideas on the main factors affecting milk protein
- Major outputs - Protein Plus\$ checkbook, Feed Plus\$ database, Advanced Nutrition Course

Regional Group Projects

7. Oversewing ryegrass FNC RG
8. MaizeCheck for silage (Maximizing silage yield) FNC
9. Silicon application to pastures NQ RG
10. Molasses feeding NQ RG
11. Fertigation demo FNC RG
12. Dairy Waste recycling FNC RG

Objectives	Projects associated with objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and encourage adoption of practices to improve sustainability of feed systems. 	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the development & availability of more efficient grasses legumes and crops. 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the availability and efficient use of supplements within feed systems. 	1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the development and uptake of extension products and packages that enhance farmers' ability to improve the sustainability of feed systems. 	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11

Issues facing portfolio

- Limited funding available for large new pasture/forage development projects – need to get current information out – communication, especially with nutrition and forage/feed utilization
- Extension is becoming challenging – especially during drought – find alternative delivery methods – communication through many media channels (dairyinfo.biz, NDfarmer, newsletters/fact sheets etc)

4.5.2 Natural Resource Management

Goal

By 2010, 100% of farmers using management practices that sustain the productive capacity and environmental integrity of SD dairy farms and their catchments.

Objectives

1. Develop regionally defined and nationally consistent targets for natural resource management, and these targets achieved by 2010.
2. Define better management NRM practices to improve environmental and economic sustainability.
3. Facilitate the development and uptake of products and packages that enhance farmers' ability to improve resource management practices and productivity.
4. To make significant and continual progress (measured annually) towards regional targets that are nationally consistent and catchment based.

Projects

1. Dairying Better n Better
 1. SEQ Region
 2. Darling Downs Region
 3. Burnett Mary Region
 4. North Qld Region
2. Dairying Better n Better – Continuous Improvement
3. NRM – Dairy Coordinator
4. NRM Dairy Project Support Officer
5. Darling Downs Soils Project
6. Utilizing Effluent – cross industry project
7. Rural water use efficiency III
8. Carcass composting
9. Riparian management

Regional Group Projects

10. Young Farmers Project Darling Downs– DD Regional Group support
11. Situation and Outlook Darling Downs – DD Regional Group support
12. Miser Weather Station support & irrigation & nutrient scheduling - FNC RG
13. Healthy soils workshops SEQ & FNC RGs
14. Nutrient composition of dairy effluent SEQ RG

Objectives	Projects associated with objectives
1. Develop regionally defined and nationally consistent targets for natural resource management, and these targets achieved by 2010.	2, 3, 4, 10, 11
2. Define better management NRM practices to improve environmental and economic sustainability	1, 3, 4
3. Facilitate the development and uptake of	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,

products and packages that enhance farmers' ability to improve resource management practices and productivity.	12, 13 14
4. To make significant and continual progress (measured annually) towards regional targets that are nationally consistent and catchment based.	1, 2, 3, 4

Issues facing portfolio

- Staff Management – new Program Manager
- Keeping an overview of NRM Body direction, funding, etc – staff responsibility
- Keeping DBnB current and sustainable as a delivery project with appropriate continuing on farm change – DBnB Continuous Improvement project.
- Delivery of NRM BMP to all farmers of all regions – gaps exist

4.5.3 Animal Management

Goal

By 2010, 100% of farmers using management practices that enhance the efficiency of production, animal welfare and the quality of dairy products.

Objectives

1. Develop animal management systems that enhance the high quality & acceptability of dairy produce.1, 2, 3, 4, 8
2. Make information about these systems available and accessible to the farming community; 1, 2, 3, 8
3. Have nationally and internationally accepted animal welfare standards being practiced on-farms within the subtropical dairying region.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
4. Adopt management systems that minimise animal health and management constraints, to improve animal performance and productivity.1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Projects

1. In Calf
Nationally Incalf is conducting Farmer Action Groups helping producers address herd fertility issues.
Incalf is currently reviewing this method of delivering activities in Qld and NSW's more geographically scattered, all year round calving systems.
2. Countdown Downunder

A collaboration between all stakeholders including the Processor to assist producers incurring penalties to reduce problem cell counts.
Currently running in FNQ

3. Cow Time
A series of workshops run to maximise the productivity in dairy.
4. Tick Projects
 - Fungal biopesticide project – DPI&F currently running to find a non chemical control
 - Genetic Marker project – CSIRO/UQDPI&F to isolate a marker for tick resistance to breed resistant cows
 - Tick/Fly working group – an industry group has been set up to oversee the implementation of BMP for tick and fly control
5. Animal Welfare Guidelines
Previously developed but continuously utilized

Regional Group Projects

6. Heat stress and fertility NQ RG
7. Buffalo flytrap testing all RGs
8. Calf rearing seminars SEQ RG
9. Rubber matting on laneways NQ RG
10. Assessing the spread of Neospora (abortion). NQ RG

Objectives	Projects associated with objectives
1. Develop animal management systems that enhance the high quality & acceptability of dairy produce.	1, 2, 3, 4, 8
2. Make information about these systems available and accessible to the farming community.	1, 2, 3, 8
3. Have nationally and internationally accepted animal welfare standards being practiced on-farms within the subtropical dairying region.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
4. Adopt management systems that minimise animal health and management constraints, to improve animal performance and productivity.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Issues facing portfolio

- Animal welfare standards are becoming politically important – projects need to highlight welfare benefit
- New tick control methods are slow in development – need to get current BMP out there so that people can utilize what we have more effectively – Working Group
- Extension of national projects has been challenging as they are time consuming – need to utilize the information from these projects in smaller extension days (field days)

4.5.4 Farm Business Management

Goal

By 2010, 100% of farm businesses implementing an integrated systems approach that enhances farm sustainability (social, economic and environmental).

Objectives

1. Change the culture the dairy community to one of a systems approach to decision making on farm.1, 2
2. Identify and develop guidelines, decision support tools and demonstrate models that enable farmers to make effective whole farm management decisions. 1, 2, 3
3. Make available and continually improve decision support tools, information and learning packages to enhance business decisions.1, 2, 3
4. To build the capacity of farm owners, managers and employees, to enable them to adopt appropriate strategies to effectively manage their business as an integrated system. 1, 2

Projects

1. M5 - Mutdapilly Farmllets, including the Dairy Predict and other calculators
2. Dairy Moving Forward – (Taking Stock and Taking Action) – offered farmers a 1 on 1 facilitated/mentored process to assess their business and develop action plan, as well as highlight priorities for future projects – Many farmers benefited from this project with improved management focus, and Nutrition Plus arose from this process
3. QDAS Support from Regional Group funding

Objectives	Projects associated with objectives
1. Change the culture of the dairy community to one of a systems approach to decision making on farm.	1, 2
2. Identify and develop guidelines, decision support tools and demonstrate models that enable farmers to make effective whole farm management decisions.	1, 2, 3
3. Make available and continually improve decision support tools, information and learning packages to enhance business decisions.	1, 2, 3
4. To build the capacity of farm owners, managers and employees, to enable them to adopt appropriate strategies to effectively manage their business as an integrated system.	1, 2

Issues facing portfolio

There is a need to reintroduce a specific farm business management project like the MilkBusiness project. This is being considered by SD. Information from M5 is available on Fact Sheets and will be published in all media over the next 12 months.

4.5.5 Human Resource Management

Goals

To build the capacity of people to be effective farm owners, managers and employees, and contribute to the development of the dairy industry.

Objectives

- To build the capacity of people to manage:
 - Dairying enterprises in the subtropical region;
 - The Subtropical Dairy at all levels and provide an opportunity for involvement in RD&E.
- To introduce a mechanism that identifies and prioritises issues and opportunities facing the industry and encourages the initiation of innovative projects and programs to address these issues.
- To initiate and maintain positive and strong relationships with individuals and organisations relevant to SD.
- To help inform the dairy industry of the results of relevant and current RD&E.
- To build the capacity of and empower subtropical dairy farmers, to enable them to identify and achieve their goals.

Projects

1. Small project and Regional Groups
2. Annual Forum
3. Development of Management Committee & Technical Advisory Group.
4. Monitoring and evaluation of the program, Management Committee and Regional Groups

Regional Group Projects

5. New Generations Forum MNC - attended by people from most Regional Groups
6. Camden Dairy Symposium- attended by people from most Regional Groups
7. Young farmers project DD Reg Grp

Issues facing portfolio

Some Regional Groups have problem with Executive succession – could be a focus for new Program Manager.

4.5.6 Communication

Goals

- To provide appropriate information to all sectors of the dairy industry and build the capacity of people to effectively seek and adopt appropriate skills and information to develop their businesses.
- To promote a positive profile and image of the SD and the dairy industry.

Objectives

- To ensure that all appropriate dairy information is collated, edited and provided in a format that producers will access. 1, 2, 3
- To ensure that appropriate media channels are provided so that all farmers have access to appropriate information. 1, 2, 3, 5
- To build the capacity of people to effectively search for and utilize appropriate information. 4
- To initiate and maintain positive and strong relationships with individuals and organisations relevant to SD. 1, 2, 3
- To help inform the dairy industry of the results of relevant and current RD&E. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Projects

1. dairyinfo.biz – the dairy farmer information web site
2. Northern Dairytimes newspaper
3. Communications plan
4. Computer training project
5. Regional Group Newsletters

Issues facing portfolio

- Communications resource person – The new Program Manager will also be a Communications Officer
- Cost of information's program – shared with DPI (newspaper & website) QDO (newspaper)
- Communications plan (internal and external) needs review – will be responsibility of new Coms Officer
- Keeping producers focused on new information is difficult in times of drought – keep NDfarmer focused on short interesting presentations

4.6 Evaluation of the Subtropical Dairy Annual Forum

4.6.1 Summary

Most of the 17 participants who responded to the evaluation questionnaire valued highly:

- New information
- Networking opportunities
- The regional group and TAG reports and
- Insight into Subtropical Dairy that the Forum offered.

Participants were overwhelmingly impressed with the opportunity to network, not only with other farmers but also with industry and government members. Respondents also indicated a strong interest in and support of the Regional Group and TAG reports. In particular, participants wanted more time to be spent on the Regional Team and TAG reports with more opportunity for question and answer time so as to increase the learning from the Regional Groups.

While trade displays were appreciated there was some dissatisfaction with some of the sponsor presentations included in the program. There was also some concern over the number of presentations scheduled on Day One of the Forum which made the day both long and exhaustive.

Participants provided useful feedback on the program and suggestions about the venue that will assist with improving the Annual Forum in future. Overall the feedback on this year's Forum was positive and participants found the event a particularly good opportunity for meeting and consolidating contacts both professionally and personally.

4.6.2 What was most useful from the Forum this year?

(17/17 answered, 24 distinct answers given)

- Networking opportunities (7, or 41% of respondents)
- Regional Group/TAG reports (7, or 41% of respondents)
- Range and quality of presentations and speakers (6, or 35% of respondents)
- Trade displays (3, or 18% of respondents)
- Combining QDO and SDP in one event (1, or 6% of respondents)

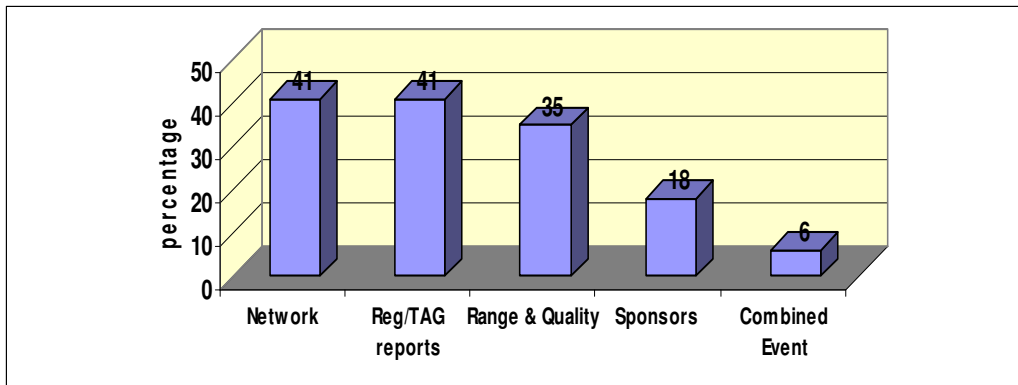


Figure 25 What was most useful about the Forum?

4.6.2 What was the least useful?

(15/17 answered, 18 distinct answers given)

2/17 participants chose not to answer this question, which we can probably take as a positive sign. Of the 15 who did answer, 1 gave positive, not negative feedback. The issues mentioned by the remaining 14 participants were as follows:

- Sponsor presentations (7, or 47% of respondents)
- Day One was too long with too many presentations (6, or 40% of respondents)
- Not enough time to discuss regional group/TAG reports (2, or 13% of respondents)
- Noise/poor behaviour from participants (2, or 13% of respondents)
- Unclear goals – communications workshop (1, or 7% of respondents)

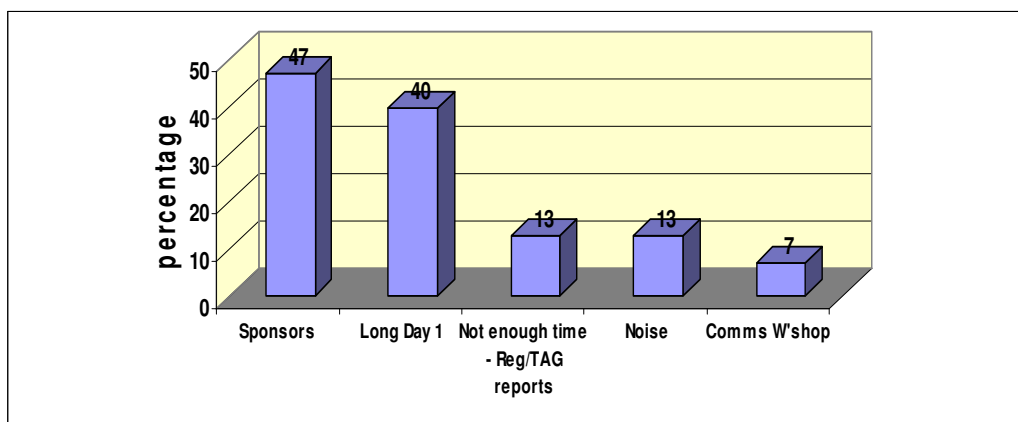


Figure 26. What was least useful about the Forum?

4.6.3 What will make the biggest difference to you in this coming year?

(15/17 answered, 1 respondent indicated they were unsure as to what they would take away from the Forum, 15 distinct answers were given)

- Learning from other farmers/groups (5, or 36% of respondents)
- Reassurance/restored faith in SDP (4, or 29% of respondents)
- Investment information (2, or 14% of respondents)
- Specific tips on breed programs and effluent management (2, or 14% of respondents)
- Monitoring & Evaluation report (1, or 7% of respondents)
- Importance of advertising and promotion (1, or 7% of respondents)

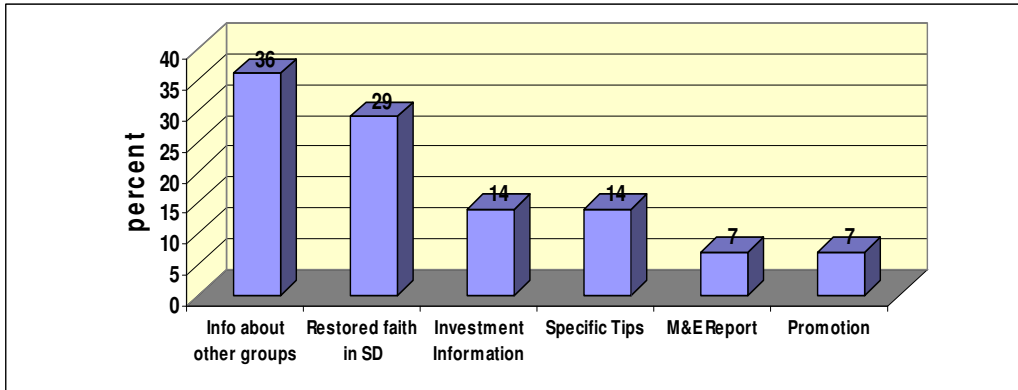


Figure 27. What will make the biggest difference to participants in the coming year?

4.6.4 What can be improved about the Forum for next year?

(17/17 answered, 24 distinct responses provided)

- More detail and time on the Regional Group/TAG Reports (9, or 53% of respondents)
- Suggestions about venue (6, or 35% of respondents)
- Suggestions about program (5, or 29% of respondents)
- Increased farmer attendance (3, or 18% of respondents)
- More time to network (1, or 6 % of respondents)

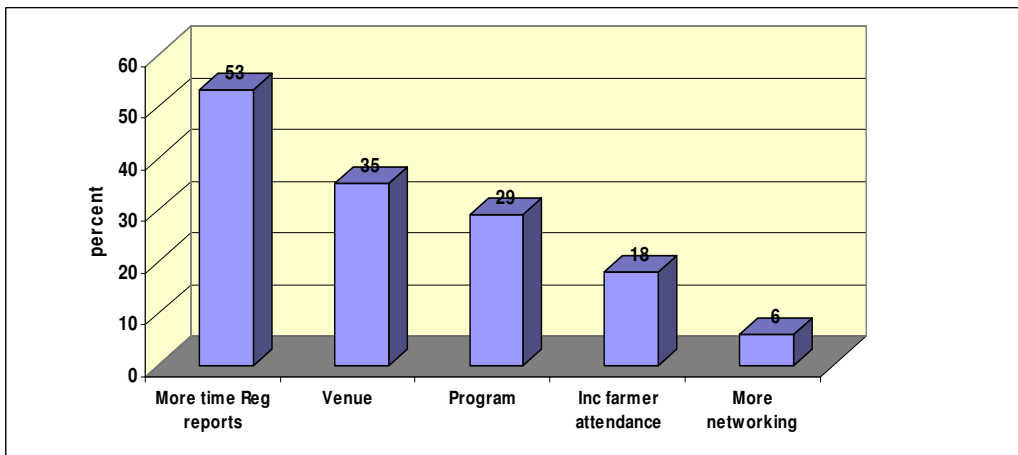


Figure 28. What can be improved?

4.6.5 Other suggestions

- Don't compromise regional team presentations and question time.
- Have less speakers on Day 1 and a more suitable venue. More question time after regional presentations.
- More time for presentations. Allow for more in depth analysis. Question and Answer time. Screen larger (difficult to see clearly).
- Sponsor grabs added additional time to the day.

- Poor scheduling of speakers with one of the best on last. Some chairing of sessions allowed the speakers to run over.
- Poor behaviour of some participants - mobile phones on, talking down the back, noise from commercial area.
- Venue is very important - acoustics, visibility to allow for good audiovisual, focus on the speaker and a large screen.
- Consideration of streaming presentations allows for more intimacy and a smaller group is conducive to discussion.
- More farmers attending conferences.
- Each group to bring more members along.
- More farmer involvement and encourage more general farmers to attend (maybe a more exotic location).
- Hamilton Island suggested as potential location for 2007 Forum.

4.6.3 Feedback from a debrief

In a debrief with our Regional Group representatives on Tuesday 29 November, the following points were raised by Regional Group members present;

- Good interaction with QDO.
- Interesting range of speakers, although some pitched at an inappropriate level, went overtime and sponsors had too long. New Zealand report on once a day milking very interesting and could have been in the morning.
- Speakers went overtime, therefore last presentations very late and numbers in the audience and interest waned
- Good for all farmers to hear Regional Group and TAG reports, although there was not enough time for the reports and the TAG reports were very late, and allowed no time for interaction and feedback to these presentations. Sharing of information from Subtropical Dairy projects not achieved well. No time for interaction following Regional Group reports - this is normally the highlight of the SD Annual Forum.
- Lighting poor and power point presentations not visible from all seats
- Good entertainment in the evening
- Good range of sponsors and good opportunity to talk to commercial people
- Not enough farmers present to showcase SD properly - Subtropical Dairy needed to promote more
- Too noisy when sponsors were packing up
- Demonstrated closer links with QDO and compromises are necessary
- Should do again, but not every year, as more time is needed for the Regional Group & TAG Reports and follow up interaction - when holding separate functions, perhaps have SD presentation in QDO State Conference, and ensure a QDO influence in SD Annual Forum.

Recommendations

Ensure that there are opportunities for networking to occur at the Annual forums. At the 2006 Forum, it was found that networks with other dairy farmers as well as with individuals associated with dairy such as tradespeople were important. Trade displays may need to be a regular feature of the Forums.

This year's combined Forum with the Queensland Dairy Organisation was a success and should occur regularly every second or third year.

Regional Group and Technical Advisory Group reports must be given more time. Each report needs to have up to 30minutes at the disposal of the presenter for the delivery and questions.

5 Appendices

5.1 Photos from the Forum dinner 2006



5.2 Dairy Australia RDP key performance indicators

RDP Key Performance Indicators

Roles and Responsibilities	Outcomes	KPI	Measure
1. To provide the industry with a better understanding of regional needs and differences.	Industry stakeholders engaged in identify regional needs.	All regional stakeholders given the opportunity to participate in industry consultation required to identify or regional priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry consultation process documented, monitored and reviewed. • No. of new people involved
	Communicate regional needs and differences to DA and other industry stakeholders and nationally for the farm sector.	Level of regional stakeholder participation in industry consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meetings or activities undertaken as part of the industry consultation process. • Number of farmers and industry stakeholders participating in the industry consultation process. • No. of new people involved
		Industry consultation process integrated into the farm sector priority setting process and review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes of industry consultation communicated to DA and SDFO. • Outcomes of industry consultation integrated as required into the industry's farm sector priority setting process.
		Feedback and advice provided to DA on the relevance and alignment to regional priorities of proposed national projects.	Document regional feedback and advice provided to DA.
		Integration of regional industry priorities into other organisations investing in collective industry activities.	Document integration of regional industry priorities into other organisations industry plans and activities.
		Communication of regional priorities to RDPs regional stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities communicated to regional stakeholders responsible for the RDP's governance and accountability (as per RDP/SDFO

<p>2. Coordinate the investment of DA funds allocated to the region for collective action.</p>	<p>Investment of DA funds aligned to regional farm sector priorities identified by RDP and SDFO.</p>	<p>Farm sector priorities that the RDP will take responsibility for leading the industry's response identified.</p>	<p>MOU).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP / SDFO meeting (as outlined in the RDP/SDFO MOU) held. • Priorities that the RDP will take responsibility for identified in consultation with the SDFO/s identified
		<p>Annual Operating Plan (AOP) developed and submitted to DA.</p>	<p>AOP includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of current activities. • Alignment of proposed activities with farm sector priorities. • The proposed investment of DA funds including the allocation of funds for Program Conduct. • Potential partners and/or investors.
	<p>Regional stakeholders understand and support the investment of DA funds.</p>	<p>AOP and investment of DA funds communicated to and approved by RDP's regional stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOP presented to and approved for implementation by regional stakeholders responsible for the RDP's governance and accountability (as per RDP/SDFO MOU). • Outcomes from the implementation of the AOP presented to and approved by regional stakeholders responsible for the RDP's governance and accountability (as per RDP/SDFO MOU).
<p>3. To provide the region with the capacity to develop and implement regionally focused R,D&E activities.</p>	<p>Coordination of R,D&E effort within a region as determined by the RDPs Annual Operating Plan (AOP).</p>	<p>Implementation of AOP monitored and evaluated by Board.</p>	<p>AOP monitoring template incorporated into Board meeting papers.</p>
		<p>Outcomes from the implementation of AOP and the investment of DA funds communicated to regional stakeholders.</p>	<p>Documentation of meeting or activities communicating AOP outcomes.</p>
	<p>Improved regional delivery of R,D&E programs.</p>	<p>Delivery of timely and targeted regionally focused programs.</p>	<p>Documentation of improved program delivery through more timely and better targeted delivery.</p>
		<p>Coordination of regional input into the</p>	<p>Documentation of improved delivery of</p>

		development and delivery of national programs to ensure they meet regional needs (timing, focus, etc)	national programs.
		Development of organisational linkages around RD&E delivery.	Documentation of improved program delivery through better linkages or coordination.
4. Attract and/or influence other funding for R,D&E	Increase resources available to the industry for collective action.	Attracting non-industry funds in collective industry activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of non-DA funds sourced by RDP. • Value of non-DA funds influenced by RDP. • Alignment of non-DA investment in collective action with farm sector priorities.
		Effort and resources invested in securing or influencing investment of non-industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new partnerships established and value of investment. • Number of new projects developed and value of investment. • Project approval rate.
5. Empower the local dairy industry and build leadership capacity across Australia.	To have the RDP as the point of contact, advice and referral on regional dairy industry issues.	Advice and referral on regional dairy industry issues provided to industry, government and community organisation.	Documentation of referrals, advice and industry input provided.
	RDPs provide the industry with the ability to identify and develop people.	Development of people engaged in R& D and E and community development via the RDPs.	Opportunities created for the personal development of high class individuals.
		Succession plans developed.	Succession plans developed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Board Directors and Chair • RDP EO and staff • Other industry or community organisations requiring regional dairy industry representatives
6. Create knowledge of and support for dairy farmers' investment in collective action.	RDPs are advocates for the Dairy Service Levy and the value of collective fund investments.	Activities initiated or undertaken in partnership with other industry bodies (DA, ADF, SDFO) to promote understanding of and support for collective action and the Dairy Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meetings or activities initiated or supported. • Number of farmers and industry stakeholders participating. • No. of new people involved

7. RDP corporate governance and management.	Ensuring a solid foundation for management and oversight by the RDP Board.	Levy. Directors with knowledge and experience in corporate governance and roles of Directors. Board and Director performance. Board monitors the RDPs KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board skills audit undertaken to ensure Director selection criteria includes understanding of the role of Directors and corporate governance. Induction of new Directors includes, where required, corporate governance training. Director attendance at Board meetings and Board Committee meetings. Director feedback and reviews conducted annually. Forward agenda developed by Board. Policy reviews completed by Board Forward. Monitoring of KPIs incorporated into Board meeting papers.
Board ensuring effective management of the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal requirements and standards met (Tax, OH&S etc.). Auditor's terms of reference developed by Board. Annual audit and auditor's terms of reference reviewed. Delegated authority to Executive Officer developed and reviewed annually. Executive Officer work plan developed and performance review completed annually. RDP/SDFO MOU and communication process monitored by Board. Quarterly meetings with SDFO (as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal compliance. Executive Officer Performance. Accountability to regional industry stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal requirements and standards met (Tax, OH&S etc.). Auditor's terms of reference developed by Board. Annual audit and auditor's terms of reference reviewed. Delegated authority to Executive Officer developed and reviewed annually. Executive Officer work plan developed and performance review completed annually. RDP/SDFO MOU and communication process monitored by Board. Quarterly meetings with SDFO (as

			<p>per communication process outlined in RDP/SDFO MOU) implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of RDP strategic direction, AOP and annual reports by regional stakeholders (as per the RDPs governance and accountability structure).
		<p>Accountability to organisations providing funding to RDPs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractual and reporting requirements of DA funding agreements/contracts met. • Contractual and reporting requirements of non-DA funders' agreements/contracts met.

5.3 Theories of change

Theory of change

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As we define it, a Theory of Change defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks--interchangeably referred to as [outcomes](#), results, accomplishments, or preconditions—is depicted on a map known as a pathway of change/[change framework](#), which is a graphic representation of the change process.

Built around the pathway of change, a Theory of Change describes the types of [interventions](#) (a single program or a comprehensive community initiative) that bring about the outcomes depicted in the pathway of a change map. Each outcome in the pathway of change is tied to an intervention, revealing the often complex web of activity that is required to bring about change.

A Theory of Change would not be complete without an articulation of the [assumptions](#) that stakeholders use to explain the change process represented by the change framework. Assumptions explain both the connections between early, intermediate and long term outcomes and the expectations about how and why proposed interventions will bring them about. Often, assumptions are supported by research, strengthening the case to be made about the plausibility of theory and the likelihood that stated goals will be accomplished.

Stakeholders value theories of change as part of program planning and evaluation because they create a commonly understood vision of the long-term goals, how they will be reached, and what will be used to measure progress along the way.