

Foreword

Dairy Science Symposium (2006) – science working for the future of the dairy industry

The National Dairy Alliance held its second Dairy Science Symposium in Mount Gambier, South Australia on 13 and 14 February 2006. Following the highly successful, inaugural Symposium in 2004, it was decided to hold this event for dairy scientists and extension practitioners every 2 years, with the aims of:

- promoting excellence in dairy science
- focusing on science, technology and innovation relevant to the farm sector of the Australian dairy industry
- providing a regular forum for exchange of research findings, ideas and information between Australian dairy scientists and between them and their international colleagues
- assisting young dairy scientists with their careers
- encouraging participation from interested dairy farmers and other industry people.

The National Dairy Alliance

The National Dairy Alliance (NDA) was established in 1999 as the group of investors, providers and industry that coinvest in dairy farm RD&E, with the broader aim of improving the sustainable competitiveness of the on-farm sector of the Australian dairy industry. It is governed by an Executive Council with members from all sectors of industry and government that are involved in dairy farm RD&E, plus an independent Chair, traditionally a dairy farmer, assisted by a part-time Executive Officer. The Executive Council is accountable to the wider group of organisations with an interest in Australian dairy farm RD&E.

The NDA works by identifying and exploring ways of expanding areas of common interest in RD&E, defining target outcomes for potential programs which reflect industry and investor priorities, and proposing and facilitating coinvestment and efficient development and delivery of programs. Its roles include providing a communications forum for investors, providers and industry; facilitating the planning and development of national RD&E infrastructure; facilitating the development of RD&E strategy, programs and projects; and identifying and collectively pursuing opportunities for collaboration with other industries.

Origin of the Dairy Science Symposium

The original stimulus for the Symposium was that no forum existed specifically for dairy farm scientists and extension workers to pursue the overarching aim of fostering the health of their discipline.

The first Symposium was held immediately after the Australian Dairy Conference in Shepparton in February 2004. The participants particularly appreciated the opportunity to hear how their work fitted into the wider dairy science field, and into the industry's innovation program. They recommended that further Symposia be held.

NDA Dairy Science Symposium 2006

For the 2006 Dairy Science Symposium the NDA organised the meeting with a theme, 'Science working for the future of the dairy industry', placing particular emphasis on the technologies currently under development in genetics, reproduction and whole-farm feed management systems. The Symposium was coordinated with the Australian Dairy Conference Dairy Innovators Forum 'Freeing the Minds', which was held in Mount Gambier on 15 and 16 February 2006.

This Special Issue contains a selection of plenary papers presented at the Symposium by distinguished scientists developing technologies in the above areas, which are likely to have significant impacts on the future dairy industry. The final paper summarises the key messages in the plenary papers and considers the timing and likely impact of these emerging technologies (Doyle 2007). The Executive Council welcomes the opportunity offered by the *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture* to publicise and strengthen the scientific credibility of the Symposium.

The Symposium was organised by a Committee chaired by Dr John Steel of CSIRO, and included Professor Wayne Bryden of the University of Queensland, Professor David Chapman of the University of Melbourne, Mr Simon Bennett, Chair of the Australian Dairy Conference Program Committee, and the NDA Executive Officer, Dr Joe Sullivan. It was greatly assisted by Ms Kathy Bachmann of the University of Queensland, and by Ms Esther Price and Ms Donna Sykes of Esther Price Promotions Pty Ltd.

The program was developed by Dr John Steel and Professor Wayne Bryden who were assisted by an advisory panel of distinguished Australian and overseas dairy science leaders. As well as the plenary speakers (a selection of papers are published in this issue) (Garcia *et al.* 2007; Smith *et al.* 2007; Tellam 2007; Dunshea *et al.* 2007), there were 27 submitted papers and 30 posters. There was also a panel discussion (see Doyle 2007) at which keynote speakers and leading farmers engaged in a lively discussion on the interface between science and the dairy industry.

A particularly pleasing feature was the Young Scientist Award for scientists under 35 years of age, and conducting research connected with the farm sector of the Australian dairy industry as part of an accredited Australian educational course. This was jointly sponsored by the NDA and the Australian Dairy Conference. The 13 contestants were judged on the basis of a scientific abstract of their paper, a poster, and an extension article describing the value of their research to the industry. Dairy Australia provided the sponsorship funding for this Award. The first, second and third prizes were presented to:

- Monique Melsen of the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria;
- Evelyn Hall of the University of Queensland; and
- Karensa Menzies of the University of Melbourne, respectively.

The NDA is grateful to all speakers, Young Scientist Award contestants, panel members and registrants, who made the event so successful. The University of Queensland is particularly thanked for preparing the Symposium proceedings of abstracts.

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Mr Shane Gittins
Chairman
National Dairy Alliance

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