

Regional Consultation Playback

Dairy Australia Strategic Plan 2030

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Introduction

Dairy Australia aims to maximise the impact of its investments by prioritising farm profitability and ensuring a sustainable dairy industry.

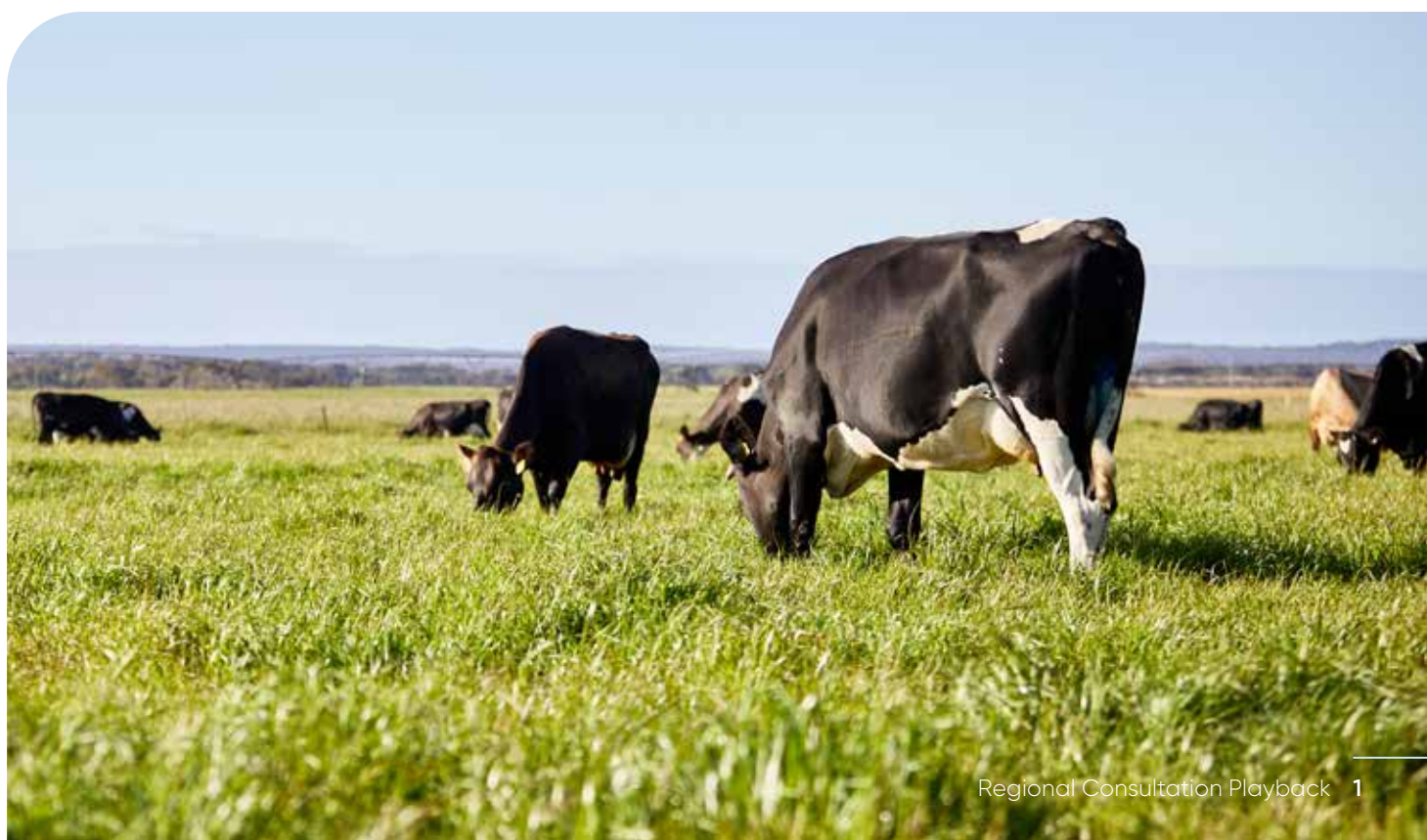
Dairy Australia's 2020–2025 Strategic Plan outlines its current areas of investment. In mid-2025, Dairy Australia will launch Strategic Plan 2030 to outline strategic priorities and investments over the five years from July 2025 to June 2030.

To ensure that the new strategic plan is relevant across each of Australia's eight dairy farming regions, Dairy Australia (DA) invited dairy farmers, Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), state dairy farming organisations, Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) and industry stakeholders to provide input through a range of workshops, surveys and online forums.

Dairy Australia committed to providing a summary of what we heard. The purpose of this report is to playback what was heard from farmers and industry about what is important, both for farm business and for the success of the dairy industry.

To inform priorities, Dairy Australia also considers government imperatives, community expectations and other factors including domestic and global trends and forecasts.

The discussions, data and insights gathered will play an important role in shaping Dairy Australia's strategic priorities to deliver the greatest impact for dairy farmers and the industry, now and into the future. We look forward to launching this new strategic plan in June 2025.



The consultation process

Dedicated workshops were held in a range of locations, both in-person and online during 2024 and early 2025. Invitations to attend the workshops were shared widely, and the opportunity was open to all Australian dairy farmers.

Workshop participants were asked to provide their views on the priorities for industry over the next five years, and the role of Dairy Australia in supporting these priorities. Surveys were also conducted in some regions.

Additional sources of data

To build a broader sense of farmer priorities in each region, data from Dairy Australia farm engagement plans were consolidated and analysed.

Farm engagement plans are developed by Dairy Australia's Farm Engagement Team, in consultation with individual farm businesses, to better understand the needs of the farm business and connect them to relevant services.

In addition to workshops focussed specifically on the strategic plan, insights were also gathered from Productivity and Competitiveness workshops, which were held in late 2024. These workshops were conducted in every dairy region to examine the key drivers of competitiveness and productivity in the dairy industry.

Consultation with every state dairy farming organisation and the boards of Regional Development Programs (RDPs) were also undertaken.

Consultation summary

Consultation activities



Types of consultation



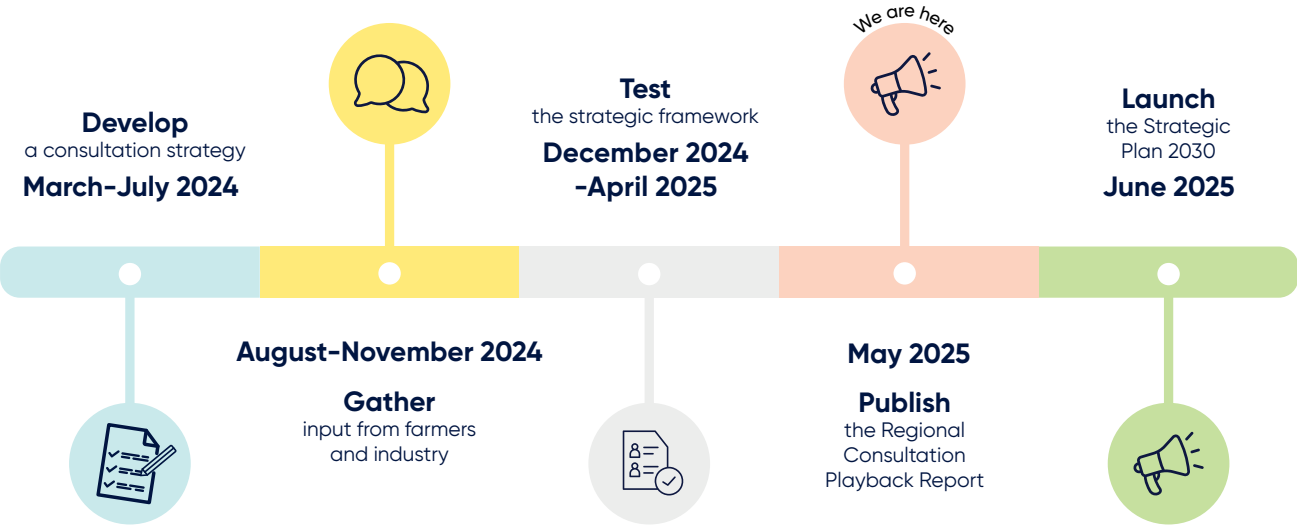
Additional farmer representative group consultation

Dairy RDP boards

State dairy farming organisations

* Some farmers may have attended multiple events
Data as at April 15, 2025

Consultation timeline



Next steps

Dairy Australia has collated input and is now finalising the details of Strategic Plan 2030, which will be published in mid-2025.

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are vibrant green grassy fields. A dirt road curves through the middle ground, leading towards a cluster of farm buildings, including a large barn and several silos. The background features rolling hills and a range of blue mountains under a sky with scattered white clouds.

Input from each dairy region

Gippsland

Input from farmers and industry stakeholders was gathered via a range of in-person events across the region in October 2024. Further insights were gleaned from consultation with the GippsDairy Board, the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop, a regional survey and local farm engagement plans.

The Gippsland Dairy Industry Strategy for the next ten years is also currently being developed. The feedback gathered will also be used to support the GippsDairy Board and other key stakeholders in the development of this industry strategy.

Key themes

Farm business profitability and resilience

- **Commercial resilience:** Significant priority to consistently generate profit to enable reinvestment and manage variability.
- **Risk management:** Support is required to mitigate profit volatility and extreme weather events through data driven decision making. Biosecurity needs to be well managed in the region.
- **Profitability** is a key priority for farm businesses success, particularly with regards to pasture-based farm systems and related research and innovation.
- **Industry performance:** Dairy needs to deliver competitive returns to be seen as an attractive industry to invest in when compared to other land use alternatives.
- **Industry infrastructure:** Opportunity to retain more value in the region by upgrading and/or expanding processor and transport infrastructure to support an increase in the amount of raw milk converted into finished goods in the region.
- **Farm business succession:** Important to recognise the impact of various ownership structures (corporate, family, shared farming) and the need for early planning to ensure succession is done well.

People

- **Skill development:** Necessary for equipping young farmers with skills, as well as ensuring a pipeline of skilled farm workers are available to address gaps in knowledge and expertise as farmers/service providers retire. Fit-for-purpose access to local training identified as a key enabler.
- **Growth opportunities:** Clear plans and career development opportunities to support staff to pursue areas of interest.
- **Future readiness:** Concern about the lack of available future-focused skills, particularly related to climate adaptation and circular economy.
- **Industry appeal:** The dairy industry needs to be a high consideration in the agriculture industry as a place to build a career. Dairy also needs to be positioned as technologically advanced to attract new labour entrants. Ongoing need to emphasise both the importance of the dairy industry in the region, as well highlight the role of the region as a major contributor to the national dairy industry.

Maintain community support

- **Consumer expectations:** Important to recognise community concerns associated with dairy farming, be aware of evolving consumer expectations and be seen as responsible in these areas (e.g. animal welfare and carbon emissions). It is important to continue to showcase the good work dairy farmers are doing with regards to caring for the environment and animal welfare.
- **Economic impact:** As a major source of employment in the region, there is emphasis on the role of supporting a thriving community and standards of living.

Innovation and technological advancement

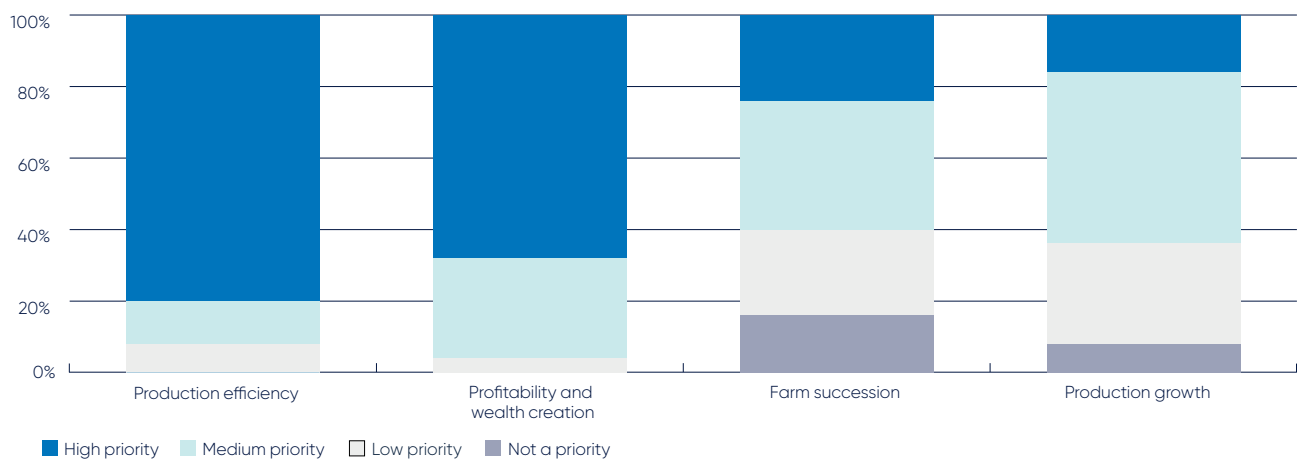
- **Regulatory challenges:** A key priority is to overcome constraints that prohibit the adoption of new technologies (eg. virtual fencing).
- **Innovative culture:** There is a need to adopt relevant technology and innovation, as this will be critical to attracting talent and maintaining international cost competitiveness (e.g. data, robots, automation, collars, green loans, reducing reliance on labour).

Sustainability

- **Water use:** Continued focus on water use efficiency and sustainable water resource management, particularly in the Macalister irrigation district.
- **Environmental commitment:** Apply circular economy principles across the industry from farm practices to processing and transport.
- **Policy implications:** The increasing demands of complying with regulation and complex reporting requirements have a cost on farm businesses, which needs to be considered, given potential impact on profitability and industry attractiveness.

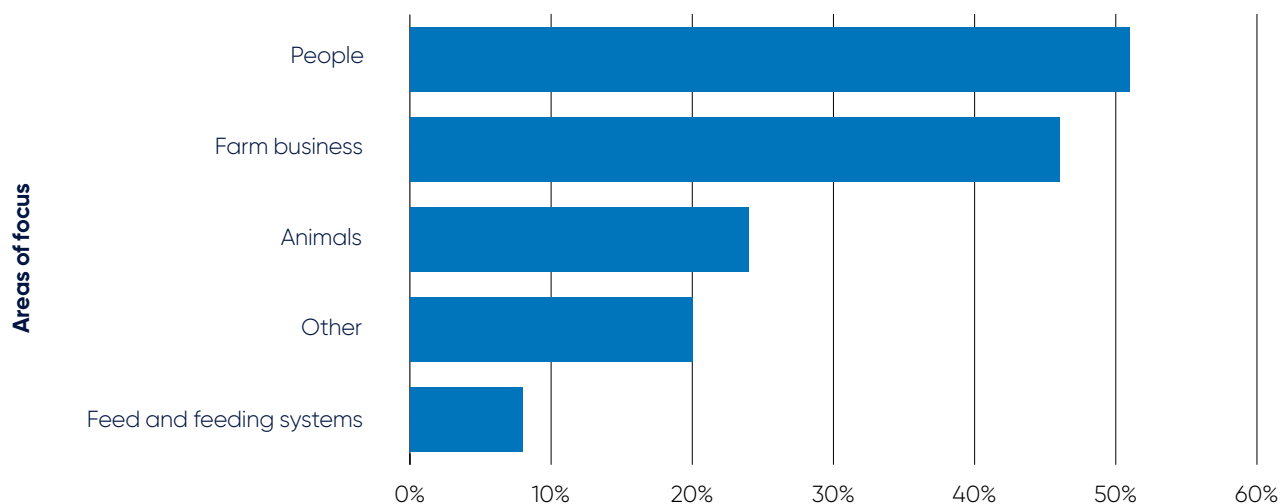
Gippsland Industry Strategy online survey results

Thinking about the future priorities of farm businesses, which of the following do you consider the highest to lowest priorities? (n=25 levy payers)



Farm engagement data

Of the 59 businesses in Gippsland with farm engagement plans¹, people, farm business and animals are the key focus areas.



Farmer quotes

"More research about efficiency rather than production".

"Don't invest in the new shiny technology or practice at the expense of the fundamentals of good business (profit drivers, governance, risk resilience)".

"More investment in young people and succession planning for the future of the industry."

¹ As at December 2024



Murray

Input was gathered from farmers and industry stakeholders via in-person events across two locations. The Echuca consultation event coincided with the Murray Dairy Annual General Meeting in October 2024, and the Alpine Valley consultation occurred in January 2025.

Further insights were also gleaned from consultation with the Murray Dairy Board, the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop and local farm engagement plans.

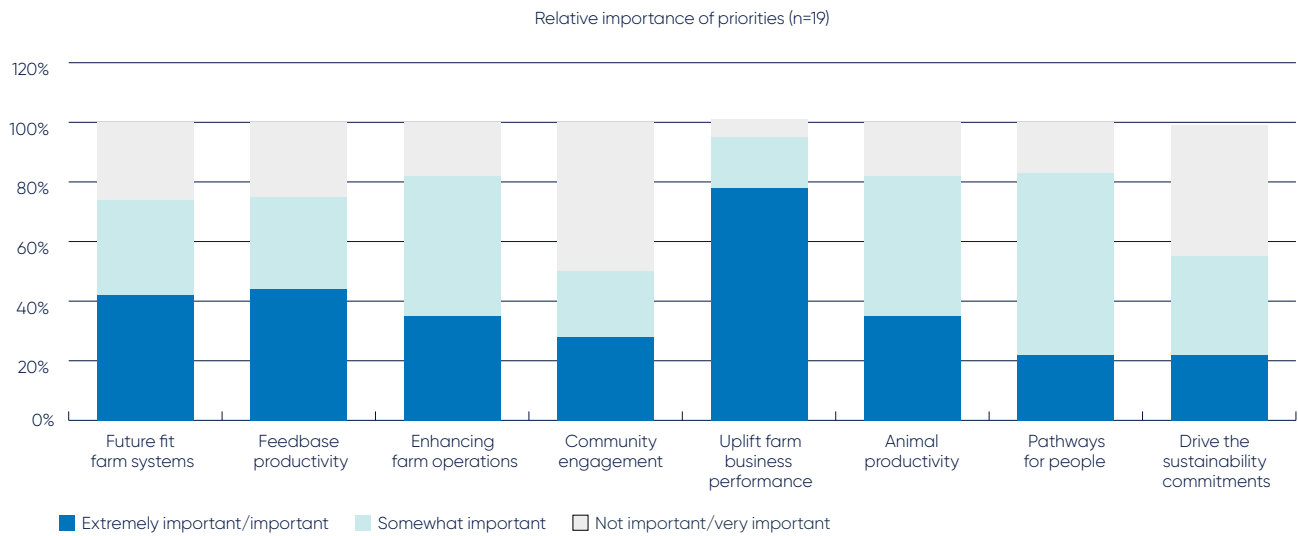
Key themes

Business resilience and risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm business fundamentals: Improve financial skills and budgeting. Focus on getting the fundamentals right across all areas of the farm system.• Input costs: Rising input costs across every component of the farm system is compounded by fluctuating milk prices.• Capital investment: Better long-term contracts and risk-sharing mechanisms are needed to facilitate capital investment decisions and related risks.• Data and tools: Profitability benchmarking and practical tools to support farmers and industry consultants.• Disaster support: Lots of commercial tools and apps are available however they can be confusing, unreliable, lack integration and support is inconsistent.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labour attraction and retention: A sustainable workforce will require better accommodation options and planning. Cultural diversity support and upskilling via collaborative training and accessible resources are essential to creating a reliable labour force.• People management skills: Capabilities related to employing staff and managing employment-related processes, especially for growing businesses.• Workplace safety: Farm businesses need a clearer understanding of obligations for a safe workplace and legislation associated with employment of staff.• Building capability: There's a need for skilled labour across the supply chain with better links between industry and education providers to ensure regional workforce needs are met.• Young dairy farmers: Invest in young farmer programs, particularly regarding innovation and farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing.• Education system: More consistent focus on agriculture as a career/industry. Teachers need more support to be able to promote careers in agriculture.
Innovation and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labour efficiencies: Focus on technology that will reduce reliance on labour and improve ways of working efficiencies.• Access global innovation: Source and apply international innovation in genetics, feed, fodder, sustainability and farm systems.• Pasture production: A key profit driver, more independent information is needed to support production.• Effluent management: Increased resources are required to support the development of better solutions.• Cost competitive: Need to remain competitive against other countries, including focus on imported dairy products.

Sustainability

- **Community and consumer expectations:** Promote the positive environmental contributions of dairy farmers and care given to animals. Correct misconceptions and protect the industry's reputation.
- **Sustainable irrigation:** Ensure milk/feed efficiencies are maximised from water investment.
- **Water security:** Focus on water management and policy issues including water availability, competition, infrastructure, and the impact of climate change. Better management and transparency of environmental water purchases and clarity of long-term policy.
- **Carbon:** Processor expectations can be hard to meet, and farmers need more support. Cost of compliance needs to be better understood by industry.

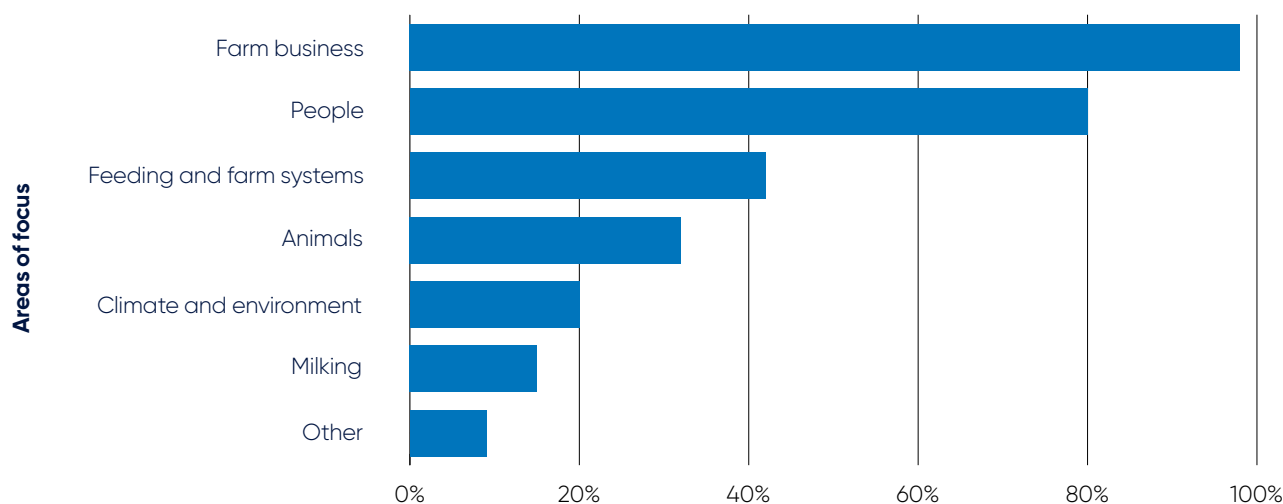
Data gathered during in-person workshop at Echuca





Farm engagement data

Of the 237 businesses in the Murray region with farm engagement plans², farm business, people, and feeding and farm systems are the key focus areas.



Farmer quotes

"Consult with local farmers to prioritise courses, research, development and extension".

"What are the advances that change our ways of working, like robotics?"

"More DA focus on welfare... keep the trust".

² As at December 2024

New South Wales

An online farmer workshop was held in October 2024 and further insights were also gleaned from the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop, consultation with the Dairy NSW Board and farm engagement plans.

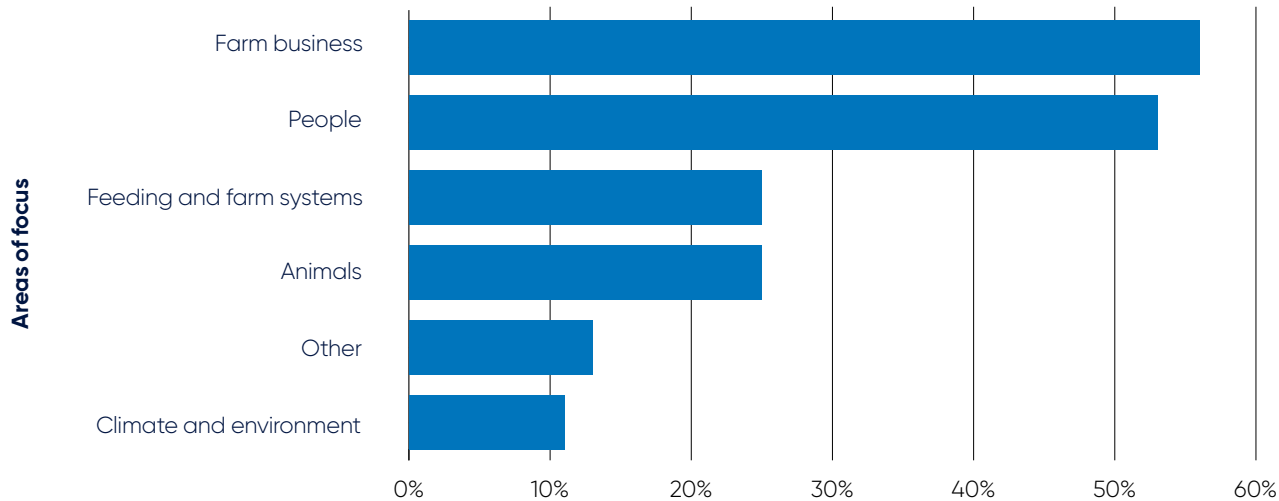
Key themes

Farm business management and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Profitability: There is significant variation in the financial performance of farm businesses across the region, a better understanding of profitability drivers is required.• Financial performance variability: Reflects the different capacity and capability of managers as well as operational circumstances.• Structural challenges: The declining number of farms is impacting critical mass, compounded by highly dispersed farm locations impacting availability of service providers and access to critical infrastructure.• Succession planning: More support is required to help farmers manage succession planning, attract and support new entrants (e.g. sharefarmer/lessee arrangements).
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skilled labour: Attracting and retaining talent is difficult due to low levels of industry awareness and credible training programs. Improved access to training and education is required to give people the skills required to work on farm.• Industry appeal: Opportunity exists to broaden the awareness and appeal of the industry by highlighting the diversity of roles, experiences and wealth creation opportunities available (e.g. sharefarmers and leaseholders).• Behavioural data insights: More data is required to better understand what would attract more entrants into the industry as well as what is impacting retention rates – both for farmers and people working on farms.
Productivity and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pasture utilisation: This is a long-standing productivity issue.• Sources of innovation: Opportunity to further leverage global technology that address regional challenges relating to virtual fencing technology, pasture quality improvement, animal health and genetic improvements.• Technological integration: Investment in genomics, automation and artificial intelligence is required to boost efficiency and utilisation of farm data, however profitability challenges need to be addressed to justify these investments.
Sustainability and industry perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost of production perceptions: Need to counter the false perception that milk is cheap to produce. Increase recognition of the infrastructure investment in dairy farming to improve profitability and promote growth.• Regulatory pressures: Increasing compliance requirements from governments, banks and processors adds cost and complexity.• Environmental management: Greater focus on data-driven evidence that highlights the environmental benefits of improving productivity.• Consumer expectation: Expectations around transparency and animal welfare are changing, especially internationally.• Industry collaboration: A unified and cohesive industry with cross organisation collaboration is required. Programs are required to support long-term industry prosperity, ensure viable markets for all dairy farm outputs.



Farm engagement data

Of the 134 businesses in the New South Wales region with farm engagement plans³, farm business, people, animals and feeding and farm systems are the key focus areas.



Farmer quotes

"The industry future is around people - including well trained employees, good decision makers, well timed intergenerational transfer that leads to good decision makers".

"Perceptions of {milk} being cheap {to produce} is not sustainable."

"Be brave, creative and engaged".

³ As at December 2024

South Australia

An online workshop, which was attended by a small group of farmers and industry stakeholders, was held in October 2024. Further insights were also gleaned from the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop, consultation with the DairySA Board and farm engagement plans.

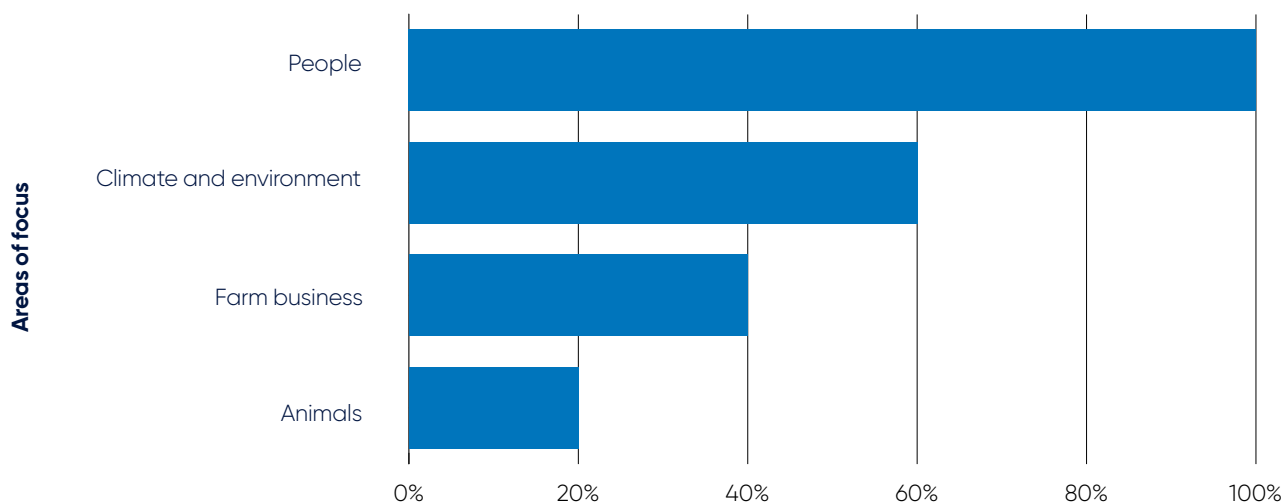
Key themes

Business management and people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and resources: Continued focus on farmer support, business management and succession planning is required. A centralised directory of key support and service providers would help farmers access the services they need.• Industry training quality: Improvements to training are required to meet the technological demands of modern dairy farming. Make it easier to be aware of what's available and to access training.• Extension support: Online and in-person training and extension programs with clear messaging about the opportunities would broaden reach and engagement.• Community connection: More industry events to build awareness of available support and foster stronger community networks (e.g. ladies' lunches).
Technology and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation: Need to keep up with technological advancements.• Regulation: Address regulatory barriers impacting farmers, particularly around the inability to introduce new technologies such as genetically modified pasture and feed crops, prohibition of virtual fencing.• Adoption: Consider concerns about lack of skills in the region and current capacity of farmers to adopt/use new technology.• Traceability: Address standardisation around traceability technologies across the supply chain.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry awareness: Greater awareness of the complexity of dairy farming is required, across government, consumers and retailers.• Industry alignment: Cross-organisational connectivity of industry bodies would improve the reach and consistency of support provided for better outcomes across the supply chain.• Social licence: Address increasing focus and expectations on farmers to maintain social licence to farm (e.g. in relation to environmental stewardship, greenhouse gas mitigation, animal welfare, industry leadership). Better engagement is needed across the supply chain.



Farm engagement data

Of the five businesses in South Australia with farm engagement plans⁴, people, climate and environment, and farm business are the key focus areas.



Farmer quotes

"Dairy farmers need to be across so much, it's getting more difficult".

"Include online options that don't require specific time commitment and has flexibility in extension access".

⁴ As at December 2024

Subtropical

An online workshop with the Subtropical Dairy Board in January 2025 identified key themes. Further insights were gleaned from the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop and farm engagement plans.

Key themes

Farm business performance and resilience

- **Business performance:** Whilst there are high levels of equity, farmers need to absorb volatile input costs and cash flow implications. Better data is required to support future capital investment decisions on farm. Particular focus on year-round farm system investment implications to increase capacity to absorb volatile input costs and understand cash flow risks.
- **Scale:** Declining farm numbers and a wide geographic spread of farmers impacts critical mass, availability of labour and service providers and industry sentiment.
- **Milk supply:** Significant volumes are imported from southern states, incurring high transport costs.
- **Farm investment:** Lack of confidence and farm business succession concerns have led to underinvestment in operating infrastructure on farm.
- **Biodiversity:** The entry of Fall Armyworm has caused changes in base summer forage species and additional costs.

People

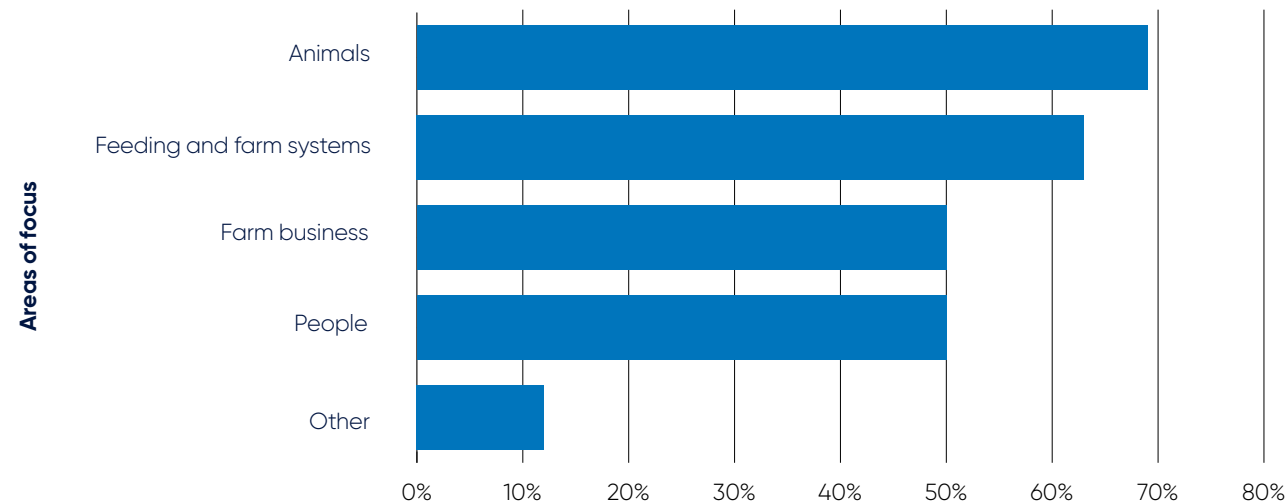
- **Attraction and retention:** Access to labour remains problematic, improved access to and training of overseas workers is required.
- **Skill development:** There is a need to continue developing skills to ensure the farm basics are being done well. Developing staff into farm manager roles is challenging, exacerbated by lack of dairy traineeships available in Queensland.
- **Wealth creation pathways:** Capital costs for new entrants is a barrier to farm ownership and there are no clear pathways for new entrants to either share-farming or lease farms.

Productivity and innovation

- **Agronomy and herd nutrition:** Forage production in North-eastern Australia exceeds temperate regions. A wide range of annual and perennial forages are available, however other ruminant industries compete with dairy for conserved forages. The management of soils is inconsistent and variable.
- **Animal performance:** High heat and humidity levels impact cow performance. The use of technology to monitor performance offers scope to maximise potential.
- **Farm systems:** Climate change, weather patterns and limited land availability is driving investment in housed systems. Mixed ration nutrition is increasing the complexity of farm business operations.
- **Productivity:** Gains have not been large enough to offset cost increases.

Farm engagement data

Of the 16 businesses in the Subtropical region with farm engagement plans⁵, animals, feeding and feed systems, farm business and people are the key focus areas.



5 As at December 2024



Tasmania

An online workshop with the Tasmania Board in January 2025 identified key themes. Further insights were gleaned from the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop and farm engagement plans.

Key themes

Farm business management and performance

- **Profitability:** A better understanding of the key drivers is required to support farm business success. The focus needs to be on five years of sustainable profits rather than celebrating one good year.
- **Input costs:** Costs such as energy, freight and land price increases are impacting farmer profitability, particularly in a region with low terms of trade impacted by global milk prices due to high export volumes.
- **Access to data:** Data needs to be easily accessible. Farm businesses need support to analyse data, to enable a better understanding of what is driving productivity and profitability on farm and in the region (e.g. Dairy Farm Monitor Report).

People

- **Attraction:** Challenges remain around attracting and supporting young and/or new entrants into dairy farming, as well as skilled people suited to farm management roles. The visibility of dairy farming as a respected career option needs to be increased.
- **Appeal to young farmers:** Position dairy farming in a way that appeals to young farmers, with a focus on technology and wealth building opportunities.
- **Wealth creation pathways:** Share farming is a viable business model to support future industry participation, however this is declining in the region, especially due to increasing corporate ownership structures.
- **Skill development:** Need to cater for skill development at the fundamental level to support seasonal staff turnover as well as advanced training for more experienced people.
- **Regional training support:** Content and delivery needs to be regionally relevant and cater for multiple languages, and various delivery formats (e.g. discussion groups, peer to peer learning etc.) Awareness of and access to extension activities needs improvement.

Technology and innovation

- **Pasture productivity:** Focus on pasture and the regional efficiency of fodder crops is important given the region's competitive advantage. Maintaining access to affordable insecticides and herbicides in line with other countries is important to manage cost of production. Resources such as pasture prediction modelling and a spring rotation planner are valuable.
- **Pace of technological change:** Technology continues to be a key enabler on farm (e.g. virtual fencing and robotics), but there is concern that existing technology is underutilised. Practice change on farm needs to be encouraged and greater showcasing of the on farm benefits is required.
- **Regionally relevant research:** Current research is not always seen as being relevant to Tasmania. Key topics for research include feedbase productivity, multi species pastures, how to extend lactation, expectation for carbon in the future and effluent management.

Industry image and culture

- **Industry attractiveness:** Opportunity to improve image and promote industry as “the employer of choice” in agriculture with greater emphasis on celebrating farmer and industry success stories.
 - **Industry pride:** Dairy needs to be seen as sustainable in terms of profitability but also as a “noble and worthy” cause for the country.
 - **Industry perceptions:** Misconceptions that milk is simple and cheap to produce is not good for industry perceptions.
 - **Farmer-to-farmer promotion:** Promoting the industry should come from farmers viewpoint and not top-down.
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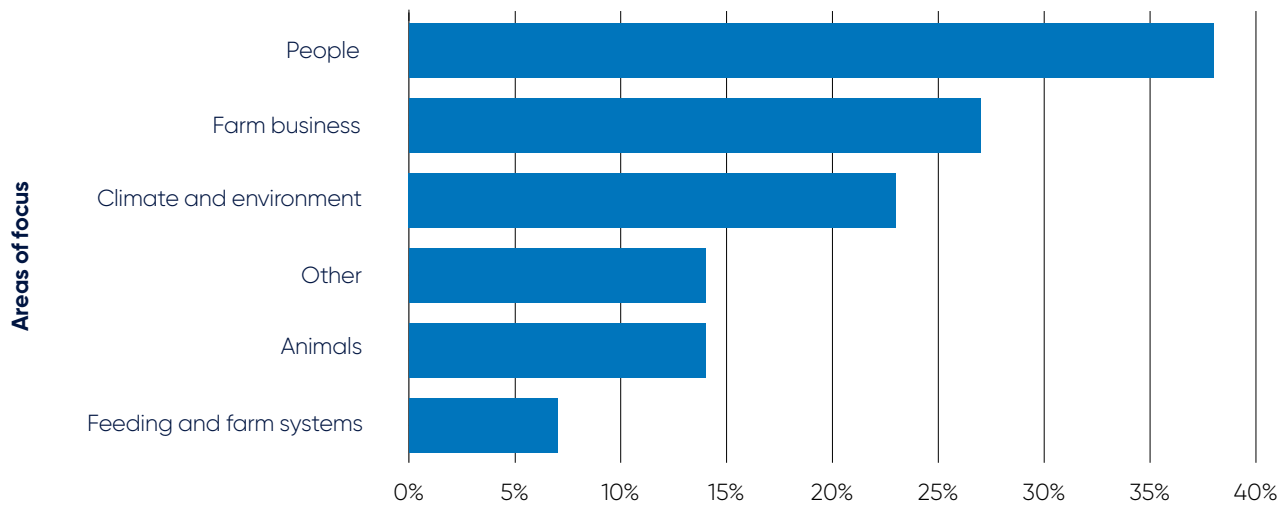
Sustainability

- **Surplus calves:** Bobby calves are a key area of concern. Not all farmers are able to raise bobby calves, and not all abattoirs will take dairy beef. Collaboration and clear direction is required.
 - **Social licence:** Cow-calf separation, effluent management, waterways management, greenhouse gases, use of chemicals according to best practice guidelines are all areas of concern. More data and evidence is needed on key issues to determine priorities and ensure that the most important outcomes for the industry are addressed.
 - **Carbon:** There needs to be greater understanding around “know your number”, carbon credits and impacts of regulation or compliance on costs.
 - **Effluent management:** Compliance requirements are evolving, may require an additional evidence base. Access to qualified expertise is constrained, upgrades can be time consuming and expensive.
-



Farm engagement data

Of the 96 Tasmanian businesses with farm engagement plans⁶, people, farm business, and climate and environment are the key focus areas.



Farmer quotes

“People are the most important part of the dairy industry to keep it growing into the future”.

“Don’t celebrate one good year – focus on a five years of sustainable profits”.

“Increasing compliance and regulatory complexity may result in more farmer exits”.

“Efficient fodder production is critical”.

⁶ As at December 2024

Western Australia

Consultation in Western Australia was conducted in November 2024 and coincided with Western Dairy's Annual General Meeting. Attendees at the WAFarmers 2024 Dairy Conference were also given the opportunity to complete a survey.

Further insights were gleaned from the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop, consultation with the West Australian Dairy Industry Working Group and farm engagement plans.

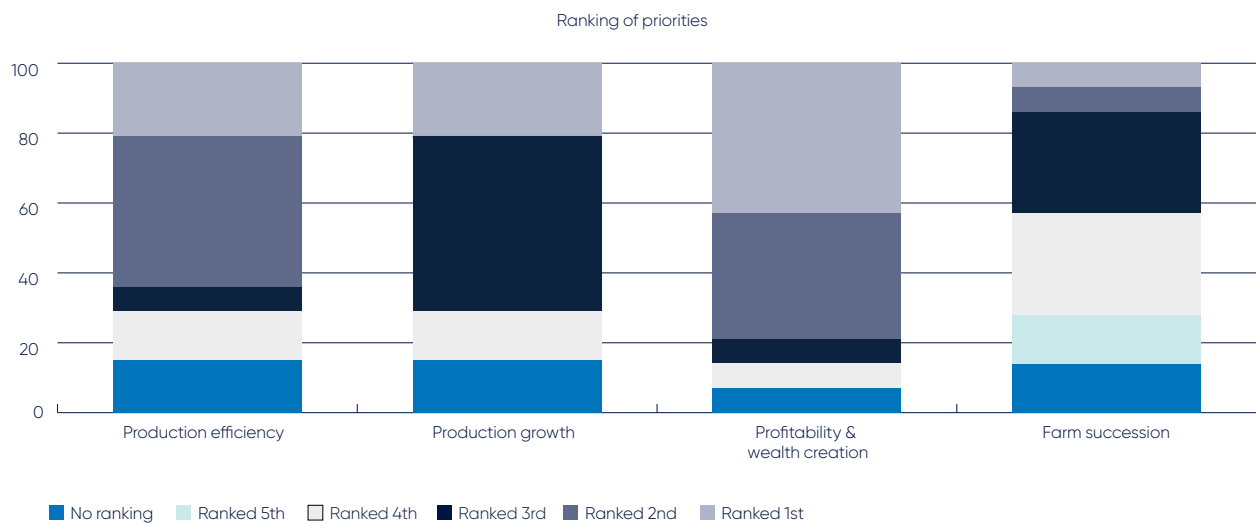
Key themes

Business performance and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business performance: Opportunity to use more data to benchmark performance and support business decisions for specific farm systems.• High cost of production: Driven by regulatory hurdles, such as restrictions on virtual fencing, dam construction, and structural challenges, such as the wide geographic spread of a relatively small number of farms.• Investment feasibility: Current farm profit margins can restrict farmers' ability to service loans with operating profits.• Investment decisions: Support required when making complex farm system and technology investment decisions.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High labour costs: A significant issue, largely driven by competition with mining and tourism sectors. Skilled migration not benefitting the dairy industry here, as it has in other regions.• Skill development: Opportunity to create a certification in dairy and target city-based students to grow awareness of careers in agriculture. Focus on management and leadership, farm safety and wellbeing, and tailored staff inductions.• Wealth creation pathways: A limited share-farming culture and barriers to entry (accessing capital/high interest rates) are impacting succession planning and attraction of new entrants. Focus may need to shift from new entrants to expanding existing farms.
Productivity and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soil optimisation: Need to keep building or maintaining soil carbon without irrigation and build healthier soils that increase pasture productivity.• Innovation: Consideration should be given to technologies related to energy reduction, battery systems for renewable energy, biodigesters, uses for methane, artificial intelligence to assist with cattle monitoring, taking milking to the cow and pasture, embryo technology, precision technology for irrigation and fertiliser.• Productivity gains: Need to support regionally relevant practice changes related to forward contracting feed, soil and plant health, multi species pastures, reducing synthetic nitrogen reliance, energy savings, and water efficiency,
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community engagement: Win local hearts and minds by promoting the benefits of milk, animal welfare advancements and the community benefits of dairy farming.• Supply chain inefficiencies: Limited processor capacity and infrastructure investment results in price volatility when milk supply exceeds processor capacity. Transportation costs are high due to the vast geographic spread of farms.• Export advantage: Products can reach Southeast Asia up to a week faster than the eastern states, resulting in a longer shelf life and reduced freight costs.• Land use competition: Urban expansion, hobby farms, and other non-agricultural uses are impacting land prices and rates. This makes expansion of farm business difficult and costly.

Results of survey conducted at the WAFarmers 2024 Dairy Conference⁷

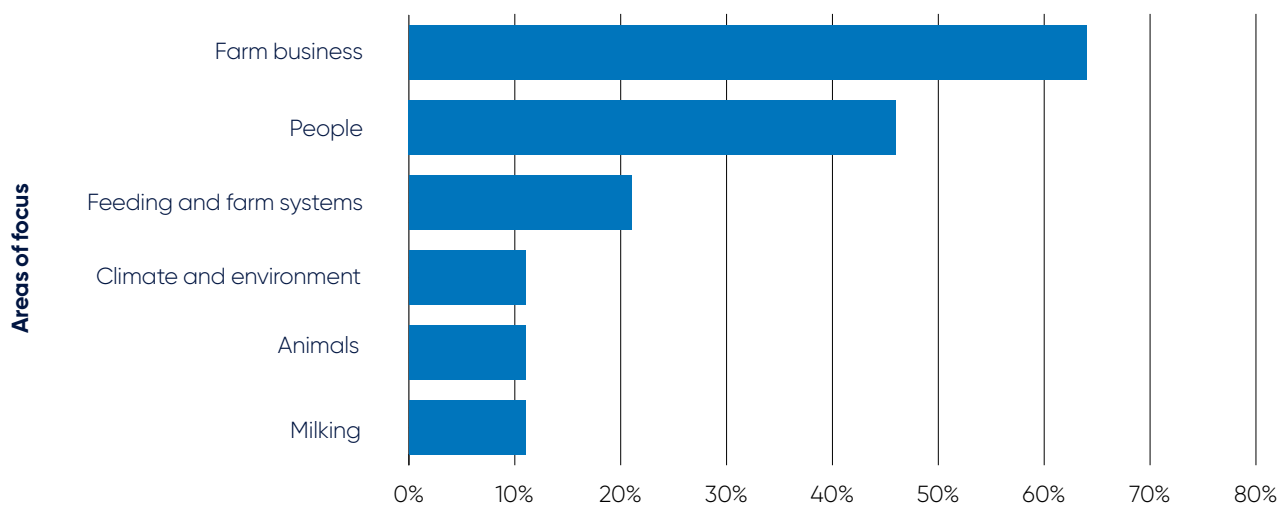
Survey question	Summary of responses
Thinking about the future priorities of your farm business, which of the following do you consider your highest to lowest priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Profitability and wealth creation" was the highest priority. • "Production efficiency" was the second highest priority.
Which of these areas do you consider have the most potential to assist with achieving your farm business' priorities?	<p>Two areas rated equally as being the strongest contributors to business success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Manage and mitigate financial and farm business risks (e.g.: extreme weather events)"; and • "Successful adoption of new on-farm practices (e.g: improved feed)".
If you think about the areas Dairy Australia can support you with achieving these priorities, which of these specific areas should they focus on in the next five years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "People – attraction and employment, management and leadership, training and development, farm safety and wellbeing" was identified as being the highest priority area of focus. • "Animal management – fertility, genetics, health and welfare" and "Climate risk, adaptation and greenhouse gas emissions" were seen of equal second highest priority.
Thinking about where Dairy Australia should prioritise investment of your levy, which of the following are most important to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Providing innovative solutions or research to improve on-farm efficiency and profitability" was the highest priority. • "Supporting farmers make more informed decisions and enable access to relevant services and resources" and "Promoting Australian dairy to the community by reinforcing the health benefits of dairy, quality of our products and demonstrating the industry commitment to sustainability" both equally identified as the second highest priorities.

⁷ There were 14 respondents to this survey



Farm engagement data

Of the 28 businesses in Western Australia with farm engagement plans⁸, farm business, people, and feeding and feed systems are the key focus areas.



⁸ As at December 2024

Farmer quotes

"For Western Australia conditions, how to keep building soil carbon without irrigation".

"More investment in young people and succession planning for the future of the industry".

"Help farmers to identify which benchmarks would be best suited to their individual farm".

"I think DA is on the right track with the work with soil biology and multi species and reducing synthetic nitrogen reliance".



Western Victoria

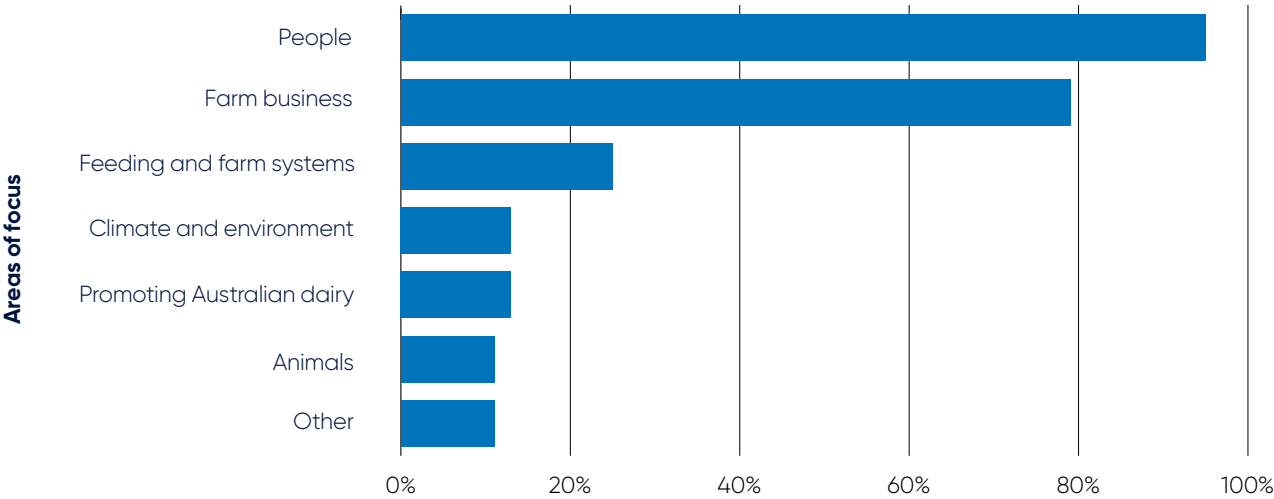
A well-attended farmer workshop was held in Camperdown in October 2024, in conjunction with WestVic Dairy's Annual General Meeting. Further insights were also gleaned from the Productivity and Competitiveness workshop and local farm engagement plans.

Key themes

Farm business management and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Profitability: A key driver to attracting industry investment and staff.• Risk management: Climate variability and extreme weather events require mitigation strategies.• Business succession planning: Succession planning and general change are key concerns, with a need to balance lifestyle goals and long-term farm viability.• Cost of compliance: Compliance burdens add cost and complexity across the entire supply chain with limited incentives.• Farm business acumen: Focus is needed to better support farmers to understand the drivers of profitability and production efficiency.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attraction and retention: Attracting and retaining people, particularly young entrants, is a major challenge. Housing is an issue, and while access to overseas workers has improved, the migration process is still complex.• Career pathways: There needs to be clear pathways to meet requirements for the next generation of farm management.• Ageing workforces: Ageing farmer base resulting in the need for effective farm transitioning and encouraging/attracting new entrants for the future of the industry.
Productivity and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhancing home grown feed: Home grown fodder is a key driver of regional productivity. It is important to retain adequate water access and reliability and build awareness of existing resources such as 'Feeding Pastures for Profit'. Understand global regulatory trends to pre-empt potential changes (e.g. nitrogen). Explore potential tax incentives and carbon credit opportunities related to home grown feed.• Regional productivity: Consideration needs to be given to appropriate research, development and extension (RD&E), state regulations, use of incentives to invest in feed equipment or infrastructure.• Adopting technology: Emphasis is required on adopting technologies aimed at profitability and production efficiencies (e.g. automation, pasture innovation), and data management (e.g. Easy Dairy as an example of herd software), wearables, genetics (or genomics) and driverless tractors.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community and consumer expectation: Perceptions of bobby calves, calf-cow separation and antibiotic use need to be considered.• Competing land use: Land diversion to forestry, urban sprawl, solar farms and other agricultural sectors are escalating land values and threatening fodder security.• Industry attractiveness: Attracting investment relies on industry branding, whole supply chain profitability and strong returns on investment.• Industry trust: Important to meet community expectations, including addressing environmental and animal welfare concerns.• Emissions intensity: Need to better understand the intensity of each farming system.• Aging infrastructure: Issues across farm and processor infrastructure, inadequate access to cheap, reliable power and regulation challenges (e.g. can make investment in water infrastructure difficult) need to be addressed for future sustainability.

Farm engagement data

Of the 111 businesses in Western Victoria with farm engagement plans⁹, people, farm business, and feeding and farm systems are the key focus areas.



Farmer quotes

“More promotion on innovation and technology available to adapt on farms. Not just programs but more broadly what can be adapted on farm”.

“We need the whole of supply chain to be profitable. So, investors are also attracted to this industry”.

“Dairy farming needs to be profitable enough to be able to pay appropriately to attract workers”.

⁹ As at December 2024





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