



Media Release



DAIRY FARMERS SAVE MONEY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE NUTRIENT BUDGETING

A dairy farmer in Tasmania's north east is reaping the benefits of a project to adopt sustainable nutrient budgeting.

Alan Davenport from Telita Dairy near Derby did a comprehensive nutrient budget with the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR).

Mr Davenport's farm was one of seven in the north east involved in the three year DairyTas project.

The project was funded by DairyTas through the Australian Government.

Soil samples were taken from various sites on the property and tested to determine nutrient levels. The farm was fully tested in year one and then certain areas were tested further in subsequent years.

Mr Davenport said combined with regular follow up soil tests, nutrient budgeting enabled confident, targeted nutrient applications.

"The nutrient budget and ongoing testing showed where we were moving nutrients around the farm, and that we hadn't had much leaching so we'd protected our nutrient investment." Mr Davenport said.

"In the autumn this year, I undertook soil testing in 12 paddocks and decided to miss autumn nutrient application on most of the farm, because the soil had sufficient nutrient levels to maintain the desired level of production.

"This saved 60 thousand dollars without a significant drop in production.

"Without nutrient budgeting, I would have put fertiliser where I didn't need to, and put myself under unnecessary financial pressure." Mr Davenport said.

Mark Smith from DairyTas said the project was part of an ongoing effort from the industry to educate and inform farmers about improved nutrient management so they could grow good pastures with fewer inputs.

"So we are aiming for farm efficiency gains as well as environmental gains.

"Farmers need to have a robust nutrient plan for their property and this means doing regular soil testing and having targeted rather than blanket fertiliser applications because we have found that nutrient levels can vary significantly within individual farms." Mr Smith said.

NRM North's Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator, Adrian James, said over the last few years, dairy farmers, DairyTas, TIAR and the regional NRM groups had done a lot of work on nutrient and water efficiency for the industry.

“It’s encouraging to see that research and extension make a positive difference for farmers during tough times.” Mr James said.

Mr Davenport has also improved water use efficiency by replacing lateral irrigators with a centre pivot.

This resulted in more grass being grown for the same amount of water and nutrients due to more even application of water across a given area of the farm.

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