

ROBOTIC MILKING CUTS LABOUR, BOOSTS LIFESTYLE

Labour and lifestyle benefits top the list of reasons for dairy farmers adopting robotic or automatic milking systems (AMS). A FutureDairy study found the labour efficiency on five Australian AMS farms was significantly better than conventional milking systems.

Labour efficiency was measured in cows per full time equivalent (FTE) where 1 FTE is 50 hours. The five AMS farms studied by FutureDairy had labour efficiencies ranging from 100 to 273 cows/FTE. Conventional milking systems typically average about 99 cows/FTE (based on the Dairy Farm Monitor Project Victoria, 2012/13).

FutureDairy collected information from each of the five farms for three days every month over a 12 month period. In addition, the farmers were surveyed to capture general information about their labour and time management, labour during the transition to AMS and the establishment of roles and routines.

All five AMS farmers reported that automatic milking had a positive impact on their quality of life and that their expectations of the impact of the technology were successfully filled. The following article provides a detailed case study of one of the farms in the FutureDairy study, the Crosby family who dairy near Conmurra, South Australia. Visit www.futuredairy.com.au to read the full set of case studies.