

FUTURE OPTIONS FOR DAIRY FEED

The FutureDairy project is working with northern Victorian researchers and farmers to investigate new options for dairy feeds that may be suitable for farming in an uncertain climate.

Project leader, Associate Yani Garcia, said the work would draw upon the principles of FutureDairy's Complementary Forage System (CFS), adapting them for specific conditions in northern Victoria.

A CFS involves allocating a portion of the farm to intensive production to increase productivity from home-grown feed. It usually involves cropping, sometimes double or triple cropping. The approach has been successful at Sydney University's Camden research farm, and is currently being trialled by dairy farmers in the Hunter Valley.

"Dairy farmers in northern Victoria and the Riverina have shown interest in increasing their options for cropping, particularly brassica or forage rape, which provides feed in autumn and winter, when pasture is usually in short supply," said Assoc. Prof Garcia.

"We think it may have potential for northern Victorian dairy farms but the first step is to conduct trials in the region to see if we can adapt our management practices for these conditions.

"We'll be comparing annual ryegrass with brassica grown on its own or double cropped with other forages.

Michael Campbell has been appointed to lead the trials in northern Victoria, working with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, the FutureDairy team, Murray Dairy and local farmers.

To ensure the recommendations are feasible for farmers, the work will involve on-farm trials as well as economic analysis.

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Michael Campbell will be leading FutureDairy's cropping trials in northern Victoria.