

## AUSTRALIA'S FIRST RESEARCH AUTOMATIC DAIRY

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The dairy industry demonstrated its commitment to the future today (Monday 31 July 2006) with the official opening of Australia's first research automatic dairy, located at NSW DPI's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute at Camden, near Sydney.

The FutureDairy project is adapting an automatic milking system, used widely in Europe, to suit Australian conditions.

Shirley Harlock, FutureDairy Chair and a dairy farmer from Western Victoria, said the Australian dairying system presented quite a challenge to automatic milking because our cows spend most of their time grazing in paddocks whereas European cows are housed and fed mostly in-doors.

"But the potential benefits in terms of saved labour, improved lifestyle and better conditions for cows make it well-worth rising to the challenge," said Mrs Harlock.

Milking cows in a traditional dairy requires staff to work early in the morning and in the evening, seven days a week.

"There's enormous lifestyle benefits to be gained if we can train cows to come to the robotic dairy and return to the paddock voluntarily," she said.

Mrs Harlock said the automatic milking system had performed beyond expectations so far.

"The combination of excellent machines, quiet cows and very experienced staff meant that the cows have quickly adapted to being milked by the robots. We also had the benefit of the experience from Max and Evelyn Warren, pioneers of Australia's only commercial dairy with an automatic milking system," she said.

In addition, Mrs Harlock said the FutureDairy team was working with the Swedish dairy equipment manufacturer, DeLaval, to develop a new concept automatic milking system, designed specifically for Australia's grazing conditions and larger herds.

FutureDairy is a major investment for the Australian dairy industry, with funding from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the University of Sydney, DeLaval and Dairy Australia. Dairy farmers themselves are investing in FutureDairy through the dairy services levy collected by Dairy Australia.

"As a dairy farmer I'm very excited about a new option for milking in the future. While it won't be for everyone, some farmers will chose automatic milking technology to free up time that can then be spent on managing their dairy business and improving lifestyle. It has the potential to make dairying a more appealing career and make it easier to attract skilled staff," she said.

The automatic milking dairy was officially opened by NSW Primary Industries Minister, Ian Macdonald.



Australia's first research automatic milking system was officially opened 31/07/2006.