

FUTUREDAIRY CASE STUDY FARM FOR NORTHERN NSW

FutureDairy has announced that brothers Paul and Wayne Clarke and Wayne's wife and Vicki have become the project's case study farmers for northern NSW.

FutureDairy is an industry project aimed at addressing the challenges farmers will face in the coming twenty years. One of these challenges is increasing feed production with limited land, water and labour resources.

The Clarkes milk 240 cows year round at their property, Loongana Park, at Dobies Bight west of Casino. As case study farmers, the Clarkes will trial FutureDairy's Complementary Forage Rotation (CFR) growing brassica, shaftal clover and maize on the same area of land in the one year.

The 4.5ha, irrigated trial will be sown with brassica and shaftal clover together in February/March 2007 and maize in October.

FutureDairy will monitor the agronomy of the CFR and compare it to a pasture paddock (kikuyu and short rotation ryegrass) on the same farm.

Wayne said the family was looking forward to being involved because they have limited land and the CFR has the potential to dramatically increase forage production.

"Our target is to match the 40t dry matter per hectare that has been achieved consistently in FutureDairy trials at Camden," said Wayne.

The Clarkes have grown all crops previously, but never on the same block of land in the one year.

"The biggest challenge will be getting the timing right – we'll have limited windows for sowing and harvesting. There's a high risk of rain delays at sowing with brassica and shaftal, and any wet weather later in the season could make it difficult to access for grazing," Wayne said.

NSW Farmers Association spokesperson Terry Toohey said the local industry was delighted that FutureDairy's research would include a site in the region.

"This is very exciting research, it will help us think outside the square and consider new technologies which will be the key to dairying in the coming decades," Terry said.

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