

Dairy Farm Digital Adoption Program



\$15 Million



Priority

The Dairy Farm Digital Adoption Program is a \$15 million small grant initiative designed to fast-track the adoption of farm automation and digital solutions in dairy farm operations. Farm automation enhances workforce management, can improve on-farm safety, and helping address critical labour shortages. Investing in smart farm technology can boost productivity and improve overall farm efficiency, ensuring a more sustainable and resilient dairy sector.

Relevance

Dairy farmers operate around the clock requiring consistent labour availability, yet ongoing labour shortages make workforce management increasingly difficult. Modernised operations will not replace worker core skills and management however targeted support is essential to upskill workers and improve rural workforce conditions. 70% of dairy farms lack automation and digital workforce tools, reducing ability to streamline operations, reduce workloads, and enhance farm safety. Investing in task automation, real-time operational monitoring, and workforce management systems can improve efficiency, ease labour pressures and help reduce workplace injuries.

Budget

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
\$5 million	\$5 million	\$5 million

Proposal

A \$15 million program over three years to provide small grants to fast-track adoption of digital solutions on farm. Eligible activities may include:

- Upgrade on-farm networks, sensors, and real-time dairy monitoring to improve efficiency
- Support activities like virtual fencing, herd tracking, and robotic milking to ease manual labour
- Implement digital rostering, task tracking, and compliance tools to enhance workforce management
- Introduce digital inductions, safety protocols, wearable tech, and virtual training to improve worker safety
- Automated reporting, analytics, and cloud record-keeping for better decision-making

Justification

- Improves worker safety, compliance, and risk management
- Helps address labour shortages by reducing manual workload through automation where suitable
- Upskills the workforce through digital training tools, subscriptions, precision agriculture systems, and data-driven decision-making capabilities to enhance worker proficiency
- Enhances farm operations through smart connectivity, automated tracking, and task management
- Improves animal welfare and sustainability through real-time monitoring, herd management automation, and precision feeding to ensure better animal health and environmental outcomes

Case study: Teagasc's Precision Dairy Program – advancing digital adoption in Irish dairy farming

Teagasc, Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority, has initiated the Precision Dairy Program to promote the integration of digital technologies in dairy farming. This initiative addresses challenges such as labour shortages, environmental sustainability, and the need for enhanced herd management.

Ireland's agricultural sector faces significant skills and labour shortages. By adopting automation, the program aims to make dairy farming more attractive to workers by reducing manual labour and improving working conditions.

The program is supported through a combination of exchequer funding and external sources. Specifically, the Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Programme (AGRIP) within Teagasc allocates approximately €75 million annually, with 60% from exchequer funding and 40% from external sources, including commodity levies and farm operational receipts.

Program examples:

- Implementing technologies like automated heat detection and electronic cow identification to monitor animal health and productivity

- Utilising automation to streamline tasks, thereby mitigating labour shortages and improving workforce efficiency
- Employing digital tools for precise pasture monitoring and management to optimise feed utilisation
- Digital tools such as wearable technology and virtual training modules are introduced to improve safety protocols, thereby reducing workplace injuries

The program provides targeted support to upskill workers, ensuring they can effectively operate and manage new technologies, leading to improved job satisfaction and career development.

The Precision Dairy Program has led to increased adoption of digital technologies among Irish dairy farmers, resulting in improved herd management, reduced labour demands, and enhanced overall farm productivity. By modernising operations, the program contributes to a more sustainable and resilient dairy sector in Ireland.

About Australian Dairy Farmers

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) is the national policy and advocacy body working to improve the sustainability and profitability of Australian dairy farming. Since 1942, ADF has represented farmers across six dairying states on key issues like trade, water, environment, milk pricing, workforce, biosecurity and animal welfare. ADF provides industry-good functions and serves as a strong collective voice to government, industry, and the community. Australian dairy provides crucial high-quality nutritional products, ensures food security, and strengthens the economy. The industry's viability and productivity is essential for a strong reliable dairy supply that supports communities and Australians' health.

Contact Us

P: (03) 9607 1399

E: reception@australiandairyfarmers.com.au

W: australiandairyfarmers.com.au

A: Level 3, HWT Tower, 40 City Road, Southbank VIC 3000

