



SADA Newsletter

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SA Dairyfarmers' Association Inc

Unit 5, 780 South Road

Glandore SA 5037

Phone: 08 8293 2399

Email: sada@sada.asn.au

Website: www.sada.asn.au

Or [find us on Facebook](#)

Its Time for the Gene Freeze to Thaw

SADA has written to both PIRSA and the Legislative Council of South Australia regarding the reviews which are currently underway into the moratorium on genetically modified products (GM).

SADA is arguing in favour of lifting the moratorium.

Many studies have been completed into the safety of GM products, including grasses for fodder and those studies have highlighted the economic imperative of advancing with GM.

Ludemann et al.¹ who studied metabolizable energy concentrations of pasture directly impacted on the operating profit of farms. He noted that:

In contrast to the breeding work by Sampoux et al. (2011), technology such as genetic modification has the potential for greater one-off gains in the metabolizable energy concentration of perennial ryegrass through modification of genes associated with the production of lignin (Tu et al., 2010), lipids (Winichayakul et al., 2008), and water-soluble carbohydrates (Badenhorst et al., 2014; Ludemann et al., 2013).

Ludemann went on to say:

Increases in operating profit were shown when using more than one management method to take advantage of changes in the pasture ME concentration trait. This indicates the benefit to dairy farmers from increasing metabolizable energy concentration in pasture will be substantial regardless of how they utilize the additional energy; whether this is through increased milk production per cow, a reduction in purchases of concentrates, or an increased SR. In reality farmers will likely use a combination of management practice changes to take advantage of the improvements in pasture traits simulated in this study.

This study therefore provides a useful method that can be used to inform investment decisions about allocation of resources toward the most beneficial perennial ryegrasses for selection in breeding programs and for renovation on farms.

From this work it is clear that GM grasses are not the only answer to increasing metabolizable energy, however, they play a central role in the matrix of management that is required to remain competitive in a world which is genetically engineering its way to competitive abundance.

What is clear from the results that the bottom line on profitability is not just marginal. One upper end example saw an increase of operating profitability of \$459 per hectare. All parts of the experimental research saw increases in profitability. This led Ludemann to conclude:

The magnitude of the economic benefits that genetic improvement in the ME concentration of pasture plants could have on Australian dairy farms warrants consideration by plant breeders developing breeding programmes.

More recently Dairy Australia reported that GM grass offers gains in the order of \$800 per hectare.

In recent decades genetic technology has advanced at a galloping rate.

What was known at the turn of the century at the time of the original IGA establishing a national position was not what is known today. The advent of clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) heralds another platform for explosive advances in the field.

¹ Higher energy concentration traits in perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.) may increase profitability and improve energy conversion on dairy farms C.I. Ludemann a,b, R.J. Eckard a, B.R. Cullen a, J.L. Jacobs b,c, B. Malcolm a, K.F. Smith a,b

^a Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Parkville 3010, Australia

^b Dairy Futures Cooperative Research Centre, Bundoora, Vic. 3083, Australia

^c Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Warrnambool, Vic. 3280, Australia

What is now known, with the benefit of hindsight, is that the original fears and concerns regarding GMs, specifically plant GMs have not become manifest. There has been no 'frankenfood' invasion and with a thousand billion meals having been consumed by humans not a single identifiable adverse medical outcome has been attributed to the genetic modification of a food item.

This absence of adverse effect can now be safely relied on to state that the scientific concerns of twenty years ago have been set aside by the evidence of experience. However, this reality does not of itself dispose of the political issues which need to be considered by the review regarding the commercial advancement or retardation of South Australia's positioning in the international market place when dealing with the perception of a clean, safe and trustworthy product.

With the science settled the only argument of merit is perception.

Organic systems of farming have seen a growing niche market for more expensive products grown with particular restrictions on the restrained use of chemicals and other attendant interventions. The argument for organics is that the market place is prepared to pay more for produce which can be labelled "organic" than it otherwise would. The reason the market place has to pay more is that organic food is more expensive to produce and there are higher losses incurred in spoiled or lost produce because of the absence of intervention. The existence of a market that is prepared to expose itself to greater expense for a 'chemical free' product is now the only real consideration for whether or not "GM" free is worth a similar risk profile carried by "organic". SADA now believes that it is not. However, having said that there are many dairy farmers in South Australia who are organic growers and the introduction of GM grasses would have to occur with safeguards for the organic growers in place.

Organics do form part of the South Australian product and protections need to be in place. Nevertheless, non-organic farmers also need to be able to enter the marketplace on a scientific equal footing as the rest of Australia and the world. It is

clear now that the advantages to farmers who use the organic product are substantial enough to make the difference between being competitive and non-competitive.

As a state we can no longer afford to clutch our favourite chamber pot to our hearts while the rest of the world is flushed with success.

SADA continues to lobby at the highest level

SADA continues to lobby at the highest level to advance the South Australian Dairy Product. Recently SADA met with both Australian Ambassadors and Trade Commissioners from the Middle East and Africa.



The two Ambassadors were Miles Armitage, (Amman) Axel Wabenhorst, (Qatar). (Axel pictured with SADA's John Elferink).

From Austrade there was: Ross Bray Trade Commissioner (Saudi Arabia) and Ian Halliday Consul General & General Manager (MEA & Turkey). These were not the first meetings that SADA has conducted with Ambassador Wabenhorst and of course Ian Halliday is known to many in the dairy industry. We continue to work with Austrade to have the South Australian Dairy product promoted in the Middle East and Africa. SADA expresses its thanks to each of these gentlemen for taking the time to meet with us.

Importing grain for stock feed

On Monday 12 November 2018 the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources made a statement regarding the idea of importing stock feed in the time of drought.

With many parts of Australia in drought, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has been getting a significant number of enquiries about importing processed plant-based stock feed, whole grain and hay.

Imported stock feed is a high biosecurity risk because it provides a direct pathway for the introduction and spread of exotic pests and diseases that can harm humans, animals, crops and the environment.

Australia has a long-established policy in place to manage the biosecurity risks associated with grain imported for stock feed, to safeguard our industries and environment.

The department assesses each stock feed import application against this policy. It applies the policy's strict assessment, monitoring and control requirements to manage the biosecurity risks, only permitting the import if it is confident the risks can be managed.

Australia permits imports of plant-based stock feed processed offshore, applying strict import conditions based on the country of origin, nature of the crop, field production method, harvest method and post-processing handling, and other factors.

Imported whole grains are also permitted under strict import conditions. The grains must be processed in a department approved manner in the metropolitan area of the port of entry, to ensure that any biosecurity concerns are addressed before being distributed.

Hay for stock feed use has never been imported into Australia due to the risk of introducing plant and animal pathogens, viable crop seed, insect pests and weeds.

Sourcing stock feed domestically poses a lower risk of introducing an exotic pests or diseases, but movement may be subject to interstate regulations. The state or territory DPI can provide advice on sourcing local stock feed alternatives and any quarantine entry conditions.

For more information on the biosecurity risks and application process for importing grain for stock feed, visit agriculture.gov.au/import/goods/plant-products/whole-grain-stock-feed-milling.

Changes to visa rules to help ag worker shortage

On the 5 November 2018 Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced changes to the Working Holiday Maker program and Seasonal Worker Program in an effort to tackle a shortage of workers in the agricultural industry.

Under the Working Holiday Maker program, backpackers will now qualify for a third year in Australia by committing to a further six months of work in regional industries in the second year of their visa. Workers will also now be allowed to stay with the same agricultural employer for a full year, and the age limit for participants in the program has been raised from 30 to 35 years.

The Seasonal Worker Program – which allows workers from Pacific island nations to live and work in Australia across several labour periods – will also be changed to extend each labour period from six months to nine months.

National Farmer's Federation President Fiona Simson commended the changes for making it easier for farmers to source labour, but warned that more reform was needed – such as the introduction of a dedicated agricultural visa – to fully address the workforce shortage.

“The farm sector's labour crisis is not going away. Everyday, farmers, including fruit and vegetable growers, dairy farmers and grain producers, are struggling to find the workforce they need to get the job done,” said Ms Simson. “Produce is going unpicked and farm businesses' potential for growth is significantly constrained. For agriculture to achieve our vision of being a \$100 billion industry by 2030, the sector's people power problems must be solved.

“Today, under the leadership of Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, the Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack and Agriculture and Water Resources Minister, David Littleproud, meaningful steps have been taken to support farmers in accessing labour and to ensuring workers are not subject to exploitation.”

Do you know the signs of Foot and Mouth Disease?

With thanks to Jess Rummery, Biosecurity and Extension Manager, Northern Australia

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is known to affect cloven hoofed animals, including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, deer, buffalo and camelids. Thankfully Australia is lucky enough not to have this highly contagious disease of livestock.

In 2013, The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) estimated the cost of an outbreak of FMD in Australia. The amount varied considerably depending on the scale of the outbreak. For example, a smaller scale outbreak was estimated to cost approximately \$6 billion over 10 years, whereas, a larger multi-state outbreak would cost significantly more – estimated to cost roughly \$52 billion over the same time period. Being such a large exporter of agricultural products, most of these costs are made up of revenue losses due to loss of our international markets.

The difference between the small and large outbreak scenario comes down to one key factor – early detection of the disease. Without early detection, the

disease can spread unrestricted making containment and eradication a much larger job when it is detected.

For this reason, it is important that everyone who works with FMD-susceptible species are familiar with the signs of the disease and if anything is found that is unusual that it is reported as quickly as possible. See the figure below for some of the typical signs of FMD.

Make sure you have the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) somewhere accessible. This number is a 24-hour line where you can report unusual signs of disease in your livestock. If in the case of FMD, every hour can make a difference.

CLINICAL SIGNS OF FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE

LOOK → **CHECK** → **ASK A VET**

EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE
1800 675 888

- tongue & mouth lesions/ blisters
- drooling
- reduced food intake

- lesions/ blisters
- reduced milk production

- lesions/ blisters
- lameness

Other signs can include:

- fever
- weight loss
- abortions

FMD is a viral disease that is not currently present in Australia that can affect cloven hoofed animals such as cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, deer, buffalo & camelids.

animalhealth AUSTRALIA

Agri-Business and Carbon Farming Public Consultations

Skills Impact has announced that the review and development of Agribusiness and Carbon Farming qualifications as part of the AHC Agriculture, Amenity Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package is now at the next stage of the project.

The initial development work on the Agri-business and Carbon Farming project has now been completed. The Subject Matter Experts (SME) meetings were held during September, with people who work directly in the Carbon Farming and Agribusiness Industry being consulted to help clarify job roles, tasks and identify any skills gaps. The SME's have now provided further feedback on the initial draft work.

The dates for the face to face public consultation workshops to be held around Australia have now been announced and will take place across a number of states and territories, with a webinar planned for those unable to attend in person.

You can now register your interest to attend these workshops to provide further input which will help

define the qualification, skill sets and units of competency.

The revised draft qualifications, skill sets and units will be made available on this webpage for public consideration and feedback from November 2018 (under the project 'Drafts Available' menu).

The dates for these workshops are now open and listed below. Please feel free to register for a workshop near you.



Face to Face Consultation

Adelaide	Wed 5 Dec 2018 (9.30am to 12.30pm)
Consultation Webinar	Fri 30 Nov 2018 (1pm to 3pm)

Please follow or go to the link below to register to attend the workshop in your state.

<https://www.skillsimpact.com.au/agriculture/training-package-projects/carbon-agribusiness-management-project/>

Does your farm spend more than \$2,500/month on energy?

With 70% of large-market energy contracts coming to an end across Australia on 31st Dec, now is the time to make sure your contract doesn't lapse and fall onto default rates during the busy Xmas / New Year period.

That's where **SADA's** partnership with energy specialist, **Make it Cheaper** can help. They understand the challenges our farmers face and are there to manage the contractual negotiations of large-market / Commercial & Industrial contracts on your behalf – saving you time and money.

In fact, Make it Cheaper identified **\$9,000 in savings for Ben Walker of Port Mac Dairy, SA.**

So, act **NOW** and contact [Make it Cheaper](#) / 02 8077-0006 to avoid being hit with peak pricing that could see you paying up to 40c peak rate.

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1300 934 934 or visit wfi.com.au**

WFI Rural Plan consists of a range of different policies, covering a wide variety of risks. This approach gives you greater flexibility, and if circumstances change it is easy for you to add another policy.

WFI Rural Plan policies you can choose from:

-  Farm Property Damage
-  Farm Loss of Income
-  Farm General Property
-  Farm Transit
-  Farm Legal Liability
-  Farm Machinery Breakdown
-  Farm Electronic Equipment
-  Farm Burglary and Theft
-  Motor Vehicle
-  Personal Legal Liability
-  Domestic Workers (WA only)
-  Classic Home
-  Standard Home
-  Personal Valuables
-  Pleasure Boat
-  Personal Accident and Illness



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