

YOU CHOOSE



Dairy Families Meeting the Challenge

Acknowledgments

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Copies of the video will be available for loan or purchase from June 2001. Contact:

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Disclaimer

NSW Agriculture has taken all reasonable steps to ensure the information contained in this publication is accurate at the time of production. Readers should ensure that they make appropriate enquiries to determine whether new information is available on the particular subject matter.

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Introduction

You Choose explores how some dairy farmers are meeting the challenge of deregulation. It records their stories and covers a wide range of options being taken. Some strategies include:

- using whole farm planning to make decisions and consider options - the family, personal, financial, physical and enviromental impacts;
- how compensation packages are being used;
- changing farming practices and reducing costs;
- increasing production and expanding;
- value adding, diversifying and trying new things;
- exploring off-farm income through business or employment;
- thinking creatively;
- using technology, experts and consultants effectively; and
- leaving the dairy industry.

The video won't provide you with all the answers but aims to share information on what others are doing and it may provide some ideas, or at least stimulate discussion as your family meets the challenge of new circumstances.

Managing Change

The only certainty is that change will keep happening. Deregulation has reinforced this fact and, as humans, it is natural to be uncomfortable with the unknown.

When we are hurt or threatened, we often look for someone or something to blame, particularly if the causes of our circumstances are imposed on us.

It is important to accept that the factors causing the unwanted changes are beyond your control and you need to move on.

It is easy to fall into the trap of self-blame or focussing your anger on the actions of others, but if you want to move forward and successfully take control you must learn to manage change, rather than have change manage you.

Isolation, secrecy and fear of being judged can be major barriers to seeking help.

It is important to discuss your thoughts with others – your family, trusted friends or even professionals such as Rural Financial Counsellors, health workers, clergy, NSW Agriculture workers, your GP or a phone counselling service.

There are many places to go for help and some are listed in the back of this booklet. By seeking help you may find new ways of thinking about things that concern you.

Steps to take

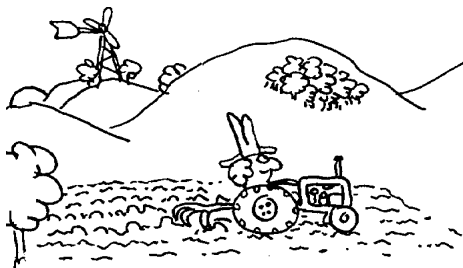
You have two choices, either you act, or you don't act. Doing something may be difficult, but think what would happen if you did nothing?

This checklist of questions is designed to help you start thinking about some actions you can take.

A useful checklist

- ☑ Have you discussed the issues with everyone involved (including the children) to find out what they think or feel?
- ☑ Have you discussed various options with everyone involved and agreed on some options to explore further?
- ☑ Have you considered the financial, health, environmental, personal, family, relationship and happiness aspects of these options?
- ☑ Have you sought out those who have professional expertise in the various aspects of the options you are considering?
- ☑ Have you developed a clear decision, which everyone understands and agrees to follow through? If not, are you prepared to carry the burden alone?





Leaving the farm

While there are a number of responses dairy farmers can make to deregulation, perhaps the most traumatic is leaving the farm.

It will most likely involve a sense of loss (making grieving necessary). You and your family can expect to feel sad, angry or even hurt. Remember that things beyond your control may have caused the decision so you are not to blame. Give yourself time to accept the changes.

It is important to work through your feelings as they are likely to get in the way of sound decision making and clear thinking. This is when speaking with another person can really help.

Make sure you involve all the family in decisions so that their ideas and feelings can also be considered.

Take time to go to favourite places on the farm, either alone, or as a family - so you can remember good times and say goodbye.



Being Understood

It is important to communicate with others effectively. Communication is the process by which we give and receive messages.

It is more than simply talking and listening. It includes non-verbal messages, such as gestures, which are often more powerful than the words.

Common barriers

- Assuming you know what others are thinking.
- Assuming that everyone understands what you are saying and meaning.

How to be better understood

- Acknowledge what the other person is saying.
- Listen attentively and respond appropriately.
- Check with the speaker by repeating what was said (in your own words) to make sure you have got their meaning right.
- Talk clearly about how you are feeling.
- Talk from your own position "*I feel...*"

- Avoid ‘but’ ‘although’ or ‘because’ as this weakens your expression of feelings by justifying or qualifying them.
- Use eye contact and talk directly to the person (unless culturally inappropriate).
- Be aware of your own emotional state – listen to your own voice.
- Talk loud enough to be heard while not shouting.
- Use simple words that have common meaning – the object is to be understood.

Helping Others

If you think a friend or neighbour may need some help here are a few things you can do:

- always be confidential;
- listen to them carefully, be understanding and don’t ask too many questions. It can be helpful just to be with them. Perhaps suggest taking a walk and getting fresh air while you are talking;
- give options, not advice. Tell them about useful resources. Support them to take the first step, but try to let them do things for themselves (such as phoning) as this will help them to gain confidence, self reliance and not depend on you;
- if the person needs more help than you can give or appears depressed, stressed, or withdrawn, gently refer them to someone you know who can help – this is a job for professionals. If this is

difficult leave a list of local contacts which they may be able to use at a later date;

- provide practical support such as babysitting, running an errand or invite them for a meal; and
- always debrief and look after yourself. You can't be expected to carry their burden. Talk to trusted family or friends but remember to maintain confidentiality with those who have shared with you.



Formal Recognition of Your Skills and Knowledge

For people wanting to explore off-farm work opportunities, or perhaps study or re-train through TAFE, a college, or university, it is important to know about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

RPL means you don't have to learn things twice and you can get credit for what you already know.

It is simply a process to recognise the skills and knowledge you have as a result of one or more of the following:

- formal study through education or training;
- informal study for recreation or personal interest;
- work experience;
- company-based training;

- industry-based training; and
- life experience.

To gain RPL you usually have to pay an assessment fee or administration charge and provide evidence of knowledge and skills - usually by completing some paperwork. It may also involve attending an interview.

On-farm examples

You may have been in charge of the books and the budgeting in your family farm business, yet have no formal business management qualifications; or you may have maintained all the farm machinery but you don't have formal qualifications or a certificate.

RPL may help to get these skills recognised in order to expand your future career and employment options.

The first step

Seek advice about RPL and collect information about the job or course you would like to do.

NSW Agricultural Colleges at Tocal and Yanco, TAFE or a local Adult & Community Education provider are good places to start finding out about what you need to do.

Remember that you will probably have lots of skills gained both on and off farm over the years which can be recognised and used in other areas.

Employment and career changes

Centrelink and other private employment agencies provide access to a large pool of job advertisements. Newspapers are still a good source of job advertisements, and there are numerous job search sites on the Internet. **<www.jobsearch.gov.au>** is the Australian government job site listing jobs Australia wide, plus links to many other job searching agencies as well as ideas for writing a resume.

<www.lg.tafensw.edu.au> is also a good site for careers and employment information for rural industries. The **Australian Association of Career Counsellors** may be useful and can provide details of career counsellors in your area. **FREE CALL 1800 222 390** or e-mail **aacc@camtech.net.au**.

Doing a skills audit

A skills audit is a process that allows people to compile a list of skills they have gained through work experience. This could be particularly useful for people who have worked on a dairy farm for most of their life, but are not sure what other jobs they may be able to do if they leave the farm. The audit will identify skills people have but may not be using on the farm, as well as skills gaps which may be able to be met by further training.

Contact NSW Agriculture's Agricultural College at **Total Ph 1800 025 520** or the Rural Assistance Authority **TOLL FREE 1800 678 593**.

Free Financial Help

Rural Financial Counsellors (RFCs) assist farmers and small rural businesses seeking confidential, free, independent financial advice and information.

Most RFCs are happy to meet you on your farm and will listen to your family's needs and work with you to help you choose options for the future which best fit those needs. They can also help with government and non government assistance schemes and referrals to other services.

There are Rural Financial Counsellors throughout NSW and their contact details are listed on the RFC website: <www.ruralcounselling.org.au>.

Centrelink delivers services and payments and has programs specifically aimed at assisting farmers, including the Dairy Exit Program, Farm Help and Retirement Assistance for Farmers Scheme.

If you are experiencing any kinds of financial difficulties, contact the **Centrelink Farmers' Helpline TOLL FREE 1800 050 585** as you may be eligible for financial assistance or contact the **Centrelink Rural Officer on (02) 4931 3775**.

The **St Vincent de Paul** (Ph 02 9560 8666) and the **Salvation Army** (Ph 02 9331 6000) can provide counselling and are often able to assist people in financial crisis.

Industry and Government Support

NSW Agriculture's Dairy Program can provide information in a wide range of areas, including breeding, cattle health and nutrition, quality assurance and where to go for other resources. If you are not already a part of the local Dairy Officers network, contact NSW Agriculture. Your local Livestock Officer or Agronomist can also put you in touch with a wide range of supportive activities.

<www.agric.nsw.gov.au>

NSW FarmBis offers financial assistance to assist farmers improve their business management skills and can fund 75% of the cost of eligible training activities. For more info call **TOLL FREE 1800 678 593**, e-mail rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au.

<www.agric.nsw.gov.au/raa/frmbiz.html>

The **Dairy Check** program assists farmers to analyse the current performance of their farm business, examine management alternatives and make informed decisions relating to farm profit. For more info contact your local NSW Agriculture Office.

Dairy Family (DF) aims to support dairy families in adjusting to the social and financial pressures of change. DF Coordinators have been appointed in dairying areas across the State. Each has produced a local directory of services and can help refer families to appropriate resources such as financial and family counselling, re-training, crisis intervention, etc.

Dairy Course at Tocal

The 3 year Dairy Apprenticeship course provides competency based training in all aspects of dairy farming, through lectures, demonstrations, group work, problem solving, case studies, farm visits and tours. The qualifications are recognised across Australia. NSW Agriculture's Agricultural College at Tocal and TAFE NSW are the main providers of the program.

Tocal has a commercial dairy farm on the college property, which is a great bonus for students and the training program. The college has residential facilities, and trainees attend for five day blocks throughout the year. The Diploma in Agriculture focussing on Dairy Production provides training from farm hand to farm manager. For more information call Tocal **TOLL FREE 1800 025 520**.

Dairy Beef Information

For information on rearing dairy beef please contact Dick Buesnel, Livestock Officer (Dairy Products), NSW Agriculture, Bega, Ph 02 6492 1733 Fax 02 6492 1402 or e-mail dick.buesnel@agric.nsw.gov.au. NSW Agriculture's bookshop also has a number of resources such as a short video outlining the basic principles of calf rearing - including selection, transport, feeding systems, housing and health management. For more info call **TOLL FREE 1800 028 374**. <www.agric.nsw.gov.au/Bookshop>

Free Family and Social Support

Country Care Link is a confidential information and support service for country NSW which provides legal assistance and personal counselling. For country people coming to Sydney, they can also arrange a volunteer to meet and provide transport, make hospital visits and help find short-term accommodation. **FREE CALL 1800 806 160**, Mon to Fri 9.00am-4.30pm.

Lifeline provides free confidential counselling 24hours, 7days a week. Call **TOLL FREE 13 11 14**.

Women's Information and Referral Service is a free information and referral service. **FREE CALL 1800 817 227**.

The **Domestic Violence Line** is a 24hour, 7day a week service, call **TOLL FREE 1800 656 463**.

Rural Women's Network is a program in NSW Agriculture and can help with referrals to appropriate services and information. Call (02) 6391 3620.

Community Health Centres provide counselling services in a wide range of areas such as grief and loss; relationship and family problems; domestic violence and sexual assault; drugs and alcohol; depression and suicide. Look under 'community health' in the white pages of your local phone book.

Church based services: for **Centacare** call (02) 9283 3099 to find your nearest service, or call the **Salvo Care Line** on (02) 9331 6000.

You Are Truly Blessed

If you woke this morning with more health than illness... you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...

you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death... you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep... you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in your wallet, and spare change in a dish some place... you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful... you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder... you are blessed because you can offer the healing of touch.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

Have a good day, count your blessings, and pass this on to a friend to remind everyone else how blessed we all are.

~ Author unknown

Dairy Family Coordinators

Bega

Sharon Spence, Ph 6492 2762

Camden & South Coast/ Southern Tablelands

Debbie Biffen, Ph 4654 5506

Dungog/Lower Hunter

Libby Alison, Ph 4992 1344 (Dungog)

Rod Williams, Ph 4994 5162 (Stroud)

Heidi Sansom, Ph 4966 4172 (Woodberry)

Far North Coast

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Christine Howard Ph 6689 9277

Gloucester

Nina McCrae, Ph 6558 4242

Muriel Plater, Ph 6558 0207

Kempsey

Karin Notley, Ph 6567 4667

Trevor Ward, Ph 6567 4205

Dairy Family Coordinators

Murray Valley/Southern Riverina

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Louise O'Neill, Ph (03) 5453 1058 (Barham East)

Singleton/Denman

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Helen Keys, Ph 4446 0025

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Rural Financial Counsellors in Dairying Areas

Far South Coast

Bruce Bashford, e-mail mrfcs@snowy.net.au
Ph (02) 6452 5059 Fax (02) 6452 3766

Lower Hunter-Manning (Gloucester)

Ron Lindsay, e-mail lhmrsvc@tpg.com.au
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Mid North Coast (Macksville)

Phillip Hindley, e-mail rural@nor.com.au
Ph (02) 6568 3888 Fax (02) 6568 3866

Murray (Deniliquin)

Ian Murray, e-mail srrasinc@deni.net.au
Ph (03) 5881 5766 Fax (03) 5881 3781

New England (Inverell)

Maryanne Kelly, e-mail nercs@northnet.com.au
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There are many more Rural Financial Counsellors throughout NSW and their contact details are listed on the RFC website:
<www.ruralcounselling.org.au>.

Rural Financial Counsellors in Dairying Areas

New England (Uralla)

David Abbott

Ph (02) 6778 4764 Fax (02) 6778 4101

Northern Rivers (Casino)

Warwick Francis & Fiona Grose, email
warwick@nor.com.au

Ph (02) 6662 6503 Fax (02) 6662 3107

Southern Tablelands/South Coast

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Upper Hunter (Mudgee)

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<www.ruralcounselling.org.au>.