

Action on dairy

Kara Lok – Dairy NZ

Climate change is obviously affecting everybody and it's a global issue but it also has ramifications for New Zealand.

Today we're in Palmerston North and it's one of nine workshops that we've been running around the country. We're going to be talking to more rural professionals about this issue and also we're going to be looking to 12 dairy farmers to be what we are calling climate change champions and these are actually dairy farmers that are interested in climate change and they want to start having discussions with fellow dairy farmers.

Aidan Bichan – Dairy Farmer

I think we see evidence of it now more with bigger storms, more extreme weather conditions and it's just going to get worse. We need to adapt our farming systems and bring in new ideas and somewhat counter the effects, but also we need to be reversing them. In the last five years our business has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by around about a third. We've also had significant changes in our animal diet so we've introduced kale with fodder beet in the winter...

Vern Brasell – Dairy Farmer

...which is very useful for balancing a cow's diet. Crops we're growing now also have a lower emission intensity than just pastures.

Aidan Bichan

On the fertiliser front we've reduced the amount of nitrogen that's going into the system.

Vern Brasell

There's unproductive parts of the farm that you can put trees in which help with biodiversity for birds and insects.

Aidan Bichan

Climate change and the mitigation is a journey and to start a journey you need to know where you're at.

Vern Brasell

Overseer is a computer model designed to help you understand environmental impacts of your farming system.

Aidan Bichan

From there you'll start to develop the best management practices that you can apply for your particular farm.

There's a whole lot of research going on around animal breeding.

Kara Lok

They are very much focusing on the two main gases which are obviously methane and nitrous oxide and we are trying to find a vaccine to reduce methane emissions on a farm by 30 percent. There's a lot happening and it's pretty exciting and we're getting some promising results.

Vern Brasell

We need to understand the way forward for dairy farmers but also for New Zealand.

Kara Lok

So the Dairy Action for Climate Change is a partnership between Dairy NZ and Fonterra and it's supported by the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry for Primary Industries. This is very much the first step around building the foundation.

Aidan Bichan

There's no one solution that we will apply and everything will come right.

Kara Lok

The agriculture is a significant contributor to New Zealand's economy and the dairy industry as well, so we need to start taking action to address our emissions alongside the rest of New Zealand.

Aidan Bichan

Basically just get out there and apply the good management practices that are becoming available through Dairy NZ and other organisations.

We're only a small fish in the sea, we can do our bit and hopefully encourage others to join in.