

Knowledge partnerships 2: extension juggling multidisciplinary in the field – early learning's from the FutureDairy project

Sean Kenny¹, Ruth Nettle²

¹The University of Sydney, Private Bag 3, Camden, NSW, 2570. Email seank@camden.usyd.edu.au ²The University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic, 3333. Email ranettle@unimelb.edu.au

Abstract

FutureDairy is a multidisciplinary project designed to help address the issues the dairy industry is expected to face over the next 20 years. A unique aspect of FutureDairy is the way in which knowledge partnerships are being used to generate knowledge around these issues – namely the availability and cost of land, water and labour. The role of extension thus far in the project has been to establish and manage these knowledge partnerships, which centre on five commercial dairy farms, in four vastly different dairying landscapes.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the early learning's from the practice of extension within FutureDairy to date. It will focus on the activities of establishing knowledge partnerships and facilitating effective planning within them. Key insights gained from activities thus far that have direct relevance to the activity of extension include: 1) the requirement of extension to tailor the establishment of knowledge partnerships to regional needs; 2) the need for extension to be competent in managing a new power dynamic for RD&E whilst pursuing knowledge partnerships; 3) the role of utilising crisis as a tool in establishing effective partnerships and; 4) the need for extension to understand and manage both formal and informal approaches to management planning with farmers.

Key Words

Systems, extension, multidisciplinary, FutureDairy, planning.