

Bill and Alison Jessep

Maffra, Victoria

The Jesseps

Bill and Alison Jessep aim to increase production per cow from 7700L/cow to 9000L/cow. “We realise that the only way to make a substantial improvement in the herd’s diet is to increase the amount of *non-pasture* feed on offer,” said Bill.

Added to that, the Jesseps need to maximise forage production to make their pivot irrigation system a worthwhile investment.

So it made sense to trial FutureDairy’s complementary forage rotation system with the aim of producing 40t DM/ha/year.

FutureDairy is working with the Jesseps to implement and test FutureDairy’s complementary forage rotation, based on growing three crops a year:

- a bulk crop (eg maize);
- a legume for nitrogen fixation (eg clover); and
- a forage to provide a pest/disease break and to improve soil aeration (eg a brassica).

At the Jesseps, the complementary forage rotation is grown under pivot irrigation. For comparison, the Jesseps plant some areas with maize/annual grass. This is grown under both pivot irrigation and under flood irrigation, which is more typical of the dairy farms in the region. Data is also collected from a ‘control’ area, which is representative of the typical pasture system on the rest of the farm.

In trialling FutureDairy’s complementary forage rotation, the Jesseps are supported by a local group of about 10 farmers and advisers with the shared interest in increasing forage production and improving herd nutrition.

“FutureDairy’s Forages study is a great opportunity for our farm and our district. It’s exciting to be involved in such an innovative project, with the support of some of the country’s top scientists, as well as our local dairying community. The target – 40t DM/ha/year is very ambitious. But all the more rewarding if we achieve it,” Bill Jessep.

FutureDairy has been researching complementary forage rotations at NSW DPI’s Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, Camden for three seasons. The Jesseps are implementing it on a much larger scale, under commercial dairying conditions. The FutureDairy team is interested in the technical, systems and social impact on the farming business.

Status April 2007

The Jesseps have completed a full season growing CFR and have recently harvested their second maize crop. Winter crops will be sown in Autumn.