The Upper Waikato Sustainable Milk Project

Frequently asked questions

Updated: 4 April 2013

If you have a question about this project, please email Adrian Brocksopp on adrian.brocksopp@dairynz.co.nz. Questions will be answered as quickly as possible and if appropriate, questions and answers will be posted on this site.

1. Why was the Upper Waikato catchment chosen for this project?
   The Upper Waikato was chosen because it is a large catchment with 700 dairy farmers. What happens here has influence on farmers in other catchments. The catchment has a history of farmer projects (i.e. Dairy Push, Tomorrow’s Farms Today) and our project builds on the great work already being done. The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River directs everyone to do their bit to clean up the Waikato River. The Upper Waikato Sustainable Milk Project is the dairy industry’s commitment to a cleaner Waikato River.

2. What will farmers and the industry gain from this project?
   The industry will gain information allowing us to demonstrate what farmers are already doing in the catchment as well as what farmers can achieve through industry support. Farmers will gain a good overview of their farms’ environmental status and have access to free one-on-one support to make changes where they are needed.

3. Do dairy farmers have to get involved?
   DairyNZ strongly encourages all farmers to participate but any changes on farm are voluntary. Farmers who get involved will have access to top professional advice at no charge and will be much better placed to meet changing regulations.

4. How will this impact on dairy company supply commitments?
   Open Country, Miraka and Fonterra all strongly supporting this project as does the rest of the industry. The DairyNZ Sustainable Milk Plan looks to build on current milk supply commitments and encourages farmers do to more than what’s currently required by regulation.

5. Is this project supported by the Waikato Regional Council?
   Yes, the Council is very supportive of the project and is represented on the Steering Group.

6. What does it cost farmers?
   The project gives farmers three days of professional advice to be delivered to each farm throughout the catchment. Subsequent changes on farm may require farmers to invest time and resources.

7. Who is paying for the project?
   The project is co-funded by DairyNZ, central government and the Waikato River Authority. And of course, farmers that are making changes on farm are also contributing.
8. Why is the Waikato River Authority supporting it?
   Over time, the collective actions of 700 farmers in the catchment will make a real difference to the health of the Waikato River. The Authority is charged by the government with supporting projects to clean up the river.

9. Can I choose which consulting company I use?
   Yes, you can choose from a list of consulting companies contracted by DairyNZ. If you do not wish to work with any of the consulting companies listed, please email adrian.brocksopp@dairynz.co.nz and an alternative arrangement can be discussed.

10. Are consulting companies being paid to do this work?
    Yes. They are contracted by DairyNZ.

11. Who will have access to the DairyNZ Sustainable Milk Plan for my farm?
    Only the farmer, the consultant and the project team at DairyNZ have access to individual Sustainable Milk Plans.

12. What will information about my farm be used for?
    Information about your farm will help your conversation with a consultant as you develop some actions to improve the environmental performance on your farm. Aggregated information from farms across the catchment will help us understand current farm performance and the opportunities to improve.

13. Will any of the information I might share with the consultant end up with the regional council?
    No, no identifiable individual information will be shared with the regional council.

14. What happens if a Sustainable Milk Plan isn’t suited to my farm?
    All Plans are farm-specific. There is no ‘one size fits all’. Your Sustainable Milk Plan will be tailored to your farm.

15. Do I have to do what the consultant suggests in the Sustainable Milk Plan?
    The plan will only capture the actions you have agreed on in your conversation with the consultant.

16. What will the cost be to implement the Sustainable Milk Plan on my farm?
    That is entirely up to you. The only things you are expected to do are those things which you have agreed to.

17. Do DairyNZ Sustainable Milk Plans cover effluent management?
    Yes. Your consultant will be able to help you to assess your current effluent system and help you put a plan in place if required.

18. What are the catchment targets set for the Upper Waikato catchment?
    There are a number of regional council rules relevant to the catchment, but no nutrient or sediment targets have been set for the catchment yet. The project steering group has developed some targets to guide farmer action. These can be found here.

19. How long have I got to get involved?
    The project funding will end in December 2014. The sooner farmers get involved the better. Why not start today?

20. Does the wider community know about this project?
    Yes. The industry is keen to demonstrate that farmers are taking voluntary action to reduce the environmental impacts of dairy farming, and that many farmers are already strongly committed to good environmental management.