



Strategic Plan

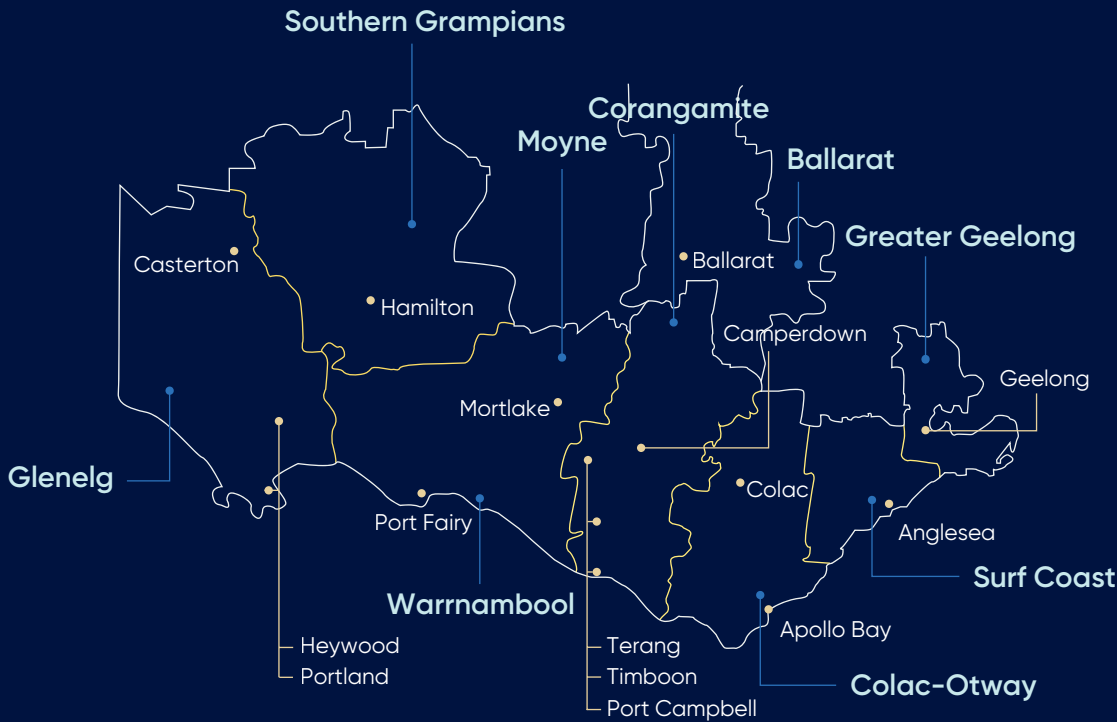
WestVic Dairy

2023-2026

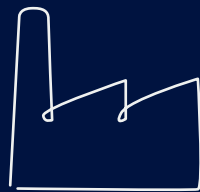


DELIVERING
for **DAIRY**

Industry snapshot



PERCENTAGE OF AUSTRALIA'S
DAIRY EXPORTS
25%



ANNUAL MILK PRODUCTION
in excess of
**1,800 million
litres**

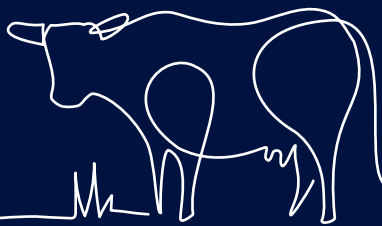


NUMBER OF
DAIRY FARMS
941



SHARE OF EXPORT VALUE,
\$756 million

AVERAGE
HERD SIZE
293
COWS



SHARE OF NATIONAL
MILK PRODUCTION
23%

Introduction

Purpose of this document

This Strategic Plan sets WestVic Dairy's (WVD) broad strategic direction for the period 2023-2026. It was developed by the WVD Board and incorporates the priorities of the region's dairy farmers after wide consultation with stakeholders and analysing a number of regional industry surveys.

The strategy informs the Business Plan, and the Operating Plan that outlines and sets the activities for the year. To ensure cohesion and consistency within the industry, WVD's strategic plan aligns with the Australian Dairy Plan and Dairy Australia's strategy.

Role of WVD and Dairy Australia

- WVD is Dairy Australia's Regional Development Program for Western Victoria and is responsible for delivering dairy extension activities and programs. It is overseen by a regional Board of Directors, comprising six farmers and two specialist members. It works closely with DA and local industry partners to facilitate technology transfer for the advancement of the sector.
- DA is the national services body for the dairy industry. Its role is to help farmers adapt to a changing environment in order to establish a profitable and sustainable industry. WVD aims to accelerate the extent and rate of adoption by farmers of industry standard practices, proven new ideas and technology. Both DA and WVD are precluded by their charter, from agri-political activity that is the role of representational bodies, such as Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF). However, a considerable amount of information and technical support is provided to these bodies for the development of industry policy.

- DA has provided additional support to WVD in recent years that has seen an enhanced capability and capacity – providing a wider range of targeted services to stakeholders from highly skilled staff. New initiatives are built on a more proactive and direct engagement model with farmers.
- As at the last financial year, the region has 941 farms that support approximately 276,000 cows. Milk production totals just under two billion litres, representing 23 per cent of the national milk production and 25 per cent of Australia's dairy exports. There is estimated to be 2,900 people employed on-farm, but a total of over 6,500 working directly in the industry (full-time and part-time).

OUR VISION

A vibrant, profitable and valued dairy region.

OUR MISSION

We strive to advance the South-west Victorian dairy industry through engagement to promote innovation, skills and sustainability.

Operating environment

Western Victoria has significant advantages over other regions due to favourable climate and many opportunities for expansion. It currently is the largest milk-producing region in Australia with relatively lower land values. It has a wealth of expertise and services that supply farm inputs and numerous options for milk and meat processing. As such, WVD operates in a dynamic economic, social and environmental context.

At the regional level, the industry faces challenges in the availability and capacity of people due to rural population decline and high levels of employment. Retirements and new entrants on the farms create ongoing change that calls for training, planning and management.

Public infrastructure supporting the industry needs ongoing investment by government. Other changes are more unpredictable, such as technological advances, climate variability and market conditions. This same technology is allowing rapid and significant improvements in efficiency on farms.

Farmers who collaborate and utilise shared knowledge seem to be able to advance their businesses, even in challenging times. Industry organisations need open and direct communications with the farmers, made increasingly possible with interactive forms of media, such as social media.

At the national and global level, the image and perceptions of the industry have an impact. Product safety, animal welfare, the environmental footprint and 'community trust' are all issues that need monitoring and are well-supported with research to justify industry practices.

Government policy, particularly in the area of workplace health and safety, labour, milk pricing, competition and consumer law, environmental regulations, trade and investment all directly impact farming and therefore advocacy by representational industry bodies on regulatory matters is important. Dairy Australia is able to supply a wealth of industry information to assist with policy development.

The number of dairy farms in the region continues to decline, many being consolidated into larger businesses. Yet other farms are falling out of dairy in favour of other enterprises (mainly grazing) which reduces the efficiency of the supply chain.

Many farms continue to expand their employment levels. This is problematic with shortages of skilled staff and housing putting added pressure on farms to improve their level of business management to not only be compliant with labour and other regulations, but in order to be profitable and sustainable.

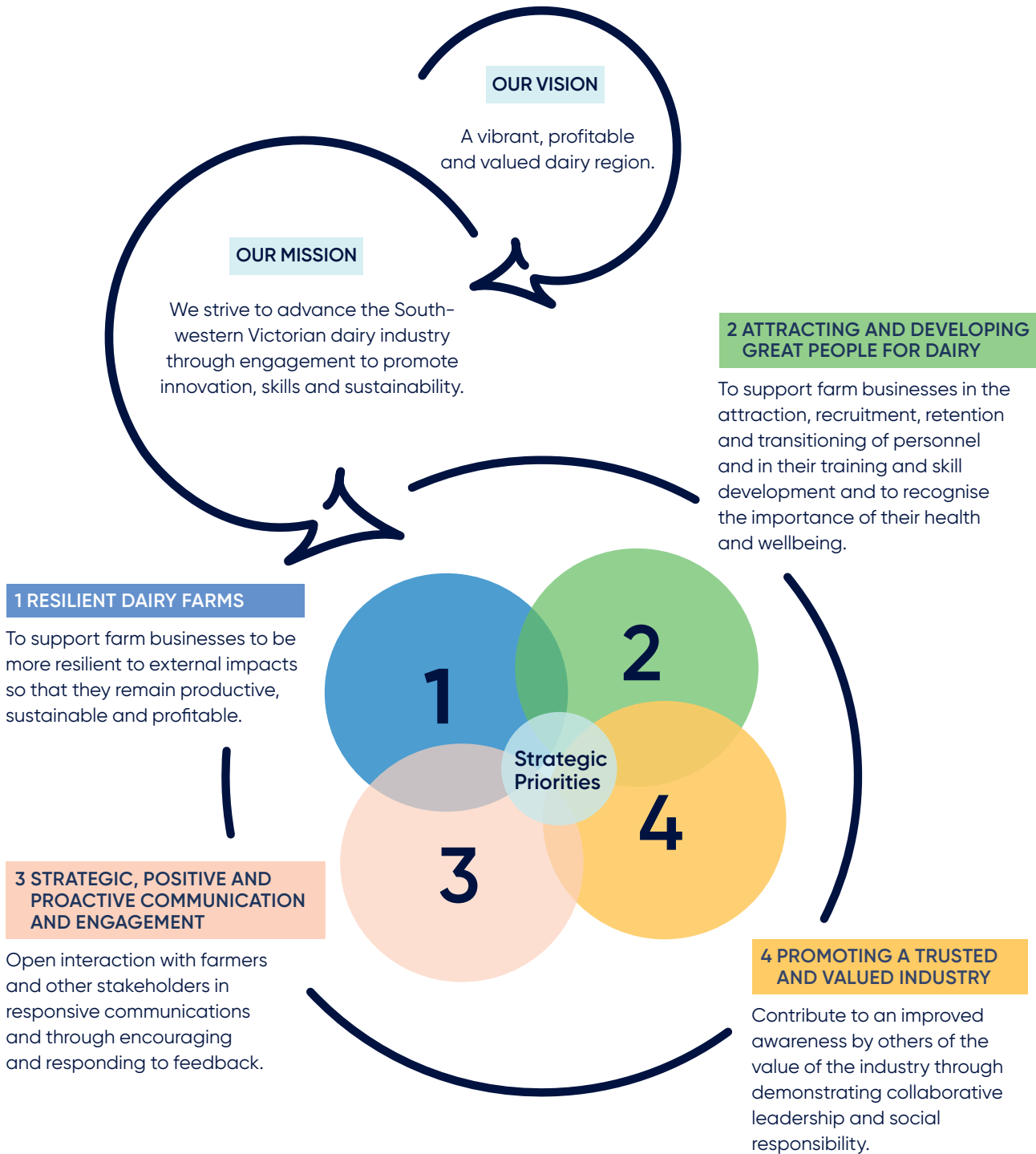
The variability in seasons and a market-based milk price, continue to place pressure on the need for timely and competent decision-making. The services of Dairy Australia and WVD are available to support levy-payers and other stakeholders in that decision-making.

The impact on extension and service delivery by the recent COVID-19 pandemic had one benefit – it necessitated a more rapid development of video conferencing and online delivery. Nevertheless, the most preferred extension formats are still those held 'face to face', such as discussion groups, Focus Farms and field days. The increased capacity to deliver and receive by remote means will provide extension services of the future with more flexibility; however, the need remains to focus on the more popular of the face to face delivery methods.



Strategic direction

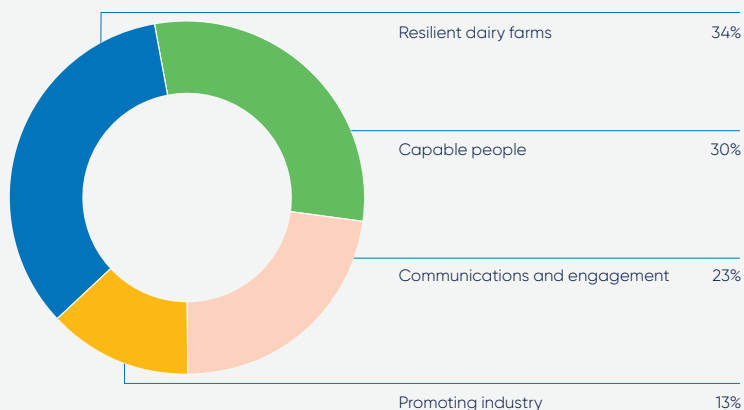
In order to achieve our mission, our strategic priorities are:





Strategic investment by priority area

Our investments will be spread across the four areas in approximately the following proportions.



Strategic priority 1: Resilient dairy farms			
Focus area	Outcomes	Actions	Success indicator
1. Profitable and productive farms	1.1 Farmers supported to be more resilient and able to manage seasonal conditions, price and cost volatility.	Deliver regionally relevant extension programs in all areas.	Service delivery across the region, seasonally relevant and sufficient to meet demand.
	1.2 Farm business decision-makers supported with systems and tools, based on clear and understood drivers of farm productivity and profitability.	Provide key tools and resources for good farm management. Promote established drivers and their success indicators.	Tools and resources readily accessible to decision-makers. Timely promotion and useful examples used.
	1.3 Use of proven techniques for sharing skills and knowledge.	Whole-of-farm business approach using state of the art extension activities and techniques	Good participant feedback in evaluations.
2. Environmentally sustainable farms	2.1 Sustainable, long-term, reduced environmental impact.	Communicate and deliver programs focussing on environmental sustainability and responsibility, helping farmers to understand their climate footprint and how to improve it.	Good promotion of environmental improvement goals, footprint and impact.
	2.2 Adaptation to a changing climate.	Communication and extension delivery of climate tools.	Good distribution and explanation of tools.
3. Innovation and technology	3.1 People informed and inspired to greater use of technology and its benefits.	Extend and communicate research and innovation outcomes.	Improved awareness of new/upgraded forms of technology on farms.
		Contribute ideas to help set research priorities and contribute to program development.	
		Demonstrate use of high value technology on farm, in all technical areas. Communicate emerging technologies via multiple channels.	

Strategic Priority 2: Attracting and developing great people for dairy

Focus area	Outcomes	Actions	Success indicator
4. Attract, recruit, retain and transition	4.1 A high level of awareness of regional dairy as an attractive and rewarding industry in which to work.	Build on liaison with schools and employment networks, that promote dairy employment opportunities. Provide accessible information on the industry when and where needed. Promotion to the regional community.	High level of school and agency market penetration. Timely response to information requests. Good coverage in regional media.
	4.2 Access to capable and skilled employees and service providers.	Strengthen relationships with tertiary and vocational training providers to encourage 'pathways into industry'.	Regular liaison with providers.
	4.3 Employers better able to attract, recruit and retain staff.	Build on farmer employment skills to become 'employers of choice'.	Focussed delivery of employment programs.
5. Training and skills development	5.1 Leadership capacity developed at all levels.	Continue to support Young Dairy Networks to develop the capability of the younger cohort in the industry. Promote and support mentoring and leadership programs, awards and scholarships	Regular promotion and strong support provided.
	5.2 Collaborative relationships and opportunities with other providers in the region.	Participate in collaborations with other regional providers to ensure consistency and efficiency in the delivery of skill development. Collaborate with other youth-related agricultural organisations to deliver regionally specific leadership programs.	Number and quality of collaborations. Seeking of collaborative activities.
6. Safe workplaces	6.1 A high level of awareness and adoption of workplace safety practices and systems.	Facilitate opportunities for delivery of expert safety information. Support and promote the adoption of safety systems.	Expert safety programs promoted and delivered.
	6.2 Improved health and well-being of our people.	Promote and facilitate health and well-being messages and professionals' integration into the dairy community.	Level of support for health professionals and promotion of their messages.



Strategic Priority 3: Strategic, positive and proactive communication and engagement

Focus area	Outcomes	Actions	Success indicator
7. Effective communication and knowledge sharing with farmers	7.1 Effective and timely communication and engagement with farmers to create a relationship and awareness of their needs and goals.	Implement the Farmer Services Strategy approach of direct staff engagement with farmers.	Achieving set targets.
		Continue the program of direct farmer engagement by WVD directors.	Participation in planned events.
		Run extension events and activities, that impart knowledge and encourage information sharing.	Deliver operating plan on schedule.
		Provide effective and targeted communications from the WVD office using suitable channels and systems.	Deliver on the annual WVD communications plan.
		Maintain regional industry calendar and a supply of information for third-party use.	Calendar kept up-to-date.
8. Collaboration and relationships with other stakeholders	8.1 Collaborative services with industry stakeholders.	Provide industry leadership through involvement in key groups – Dairy Industry Leadership Group (DILG).	RM participation in DILG.
		Harness the knowledge of industry stakeholders and find synergies with their activities.	Meetings held and initiatives developed.
		Leverage funding opportunities.	Level of funding support received.
		Coordinate and cooperate in information sharing to farmers.	Minimal gaps or overlaps in service provision.
		Liaise regularly with managers of key stakeholder organisations and service providers including farmer representative bodies and the processors.	Frequency and quality of liaison.
8.2 Effective communication of industry structure, roles and responsibility and levy investment.	Communicate on a regular cycle to inform stakeholders of the industry architecture and organisational responsibilities.	Meet communication schedules for this content.	

Strategic Priority 4: Promoting a trusted and valuable industry (Dairy Australia takes the lead on many activities in this priority)

Focus area	Outcomes	Actions	Success indicator
9. Regional and economic value	9.1 Acting with social responsibility to retain social licence and value.	Promote the positive culture around business integrity, employment, environment, animal welfare.	Suitable activities and communications output
		Help Dairy Australia to provide regional context to communication campaigns.	Advisory input to DA.
		Promote and organise celebrations of the industry.	Holding special events for this purpose.
		Be good corporate citizens in the regional community by 'buying local', paying on time and supporting local causes.	Adherence to procurement policies.
		Promote the significance of direct and indirect industry employment opportunities.	Appropriate reference in public forums/media.
		Regularly contribute information to (local) media.	Meet media requests and deadlines.
	9.2 Collaborative leadership through engagement with regional decision makers, outside the industry.	Maintain good working relationships with local government, agencies and key stakeholders.	Regular liaison.
		Contribute information and relevancy to local policy debates and organisations.	Level of awareness of regional issues and information support.
		Participate in regional industry/community forums and organisations.	Level of participation.
	9.3 Industry and community are supported during emergency.	Participate in delegated role of emergency preparedness and training.	Level of participation and ability to fulfil delegated role.
		Communicate emergency information to the regional industry.	

Operating principles

Organisational values

Our values underpin our behaviours and inform the way we do business in order to work towards our vision and implement our strategy. We adopt Dairy Australia's values, which are the following:

- Farmer first – farmer needs guide our purpose.
- One team – we work together to achieve great things.
- Innovative thinking – we embrace new ideas and learn as we go.
- Decisive action – we make informed decisions and move quickly to implement.

Monitoring and evaluation process

WVD is committed to regular monitoring and evaluation of its Strategy. This ensures good progress towards achieving its mission through implementing the actions under each strategic focus area. To be effective in this, WVD will use a straightforward approach to monitoring and evaluation, which aligns with its annual reporting period.

Stakeholder collaboration

WVD values its strong relationships with the region's farmers and their representative bodies, along with government organisations and all businesses in the dairy supply chain, recognising their various roles and importance.

Funding

WVD relies significantly on funding from Dairy Australia. Additionally, we seek to attract extra funds to support our objectives – from government, sponsors, and other external parties in order to leverage Dairy Australia funding. We invite collaborative funding partnerships with other stakeholders where mutual goals are sought.





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