

Dairy farming opportunity to turn manure into income

Dairy producers could soon earn carbon credits through the Federal Government's Carbon Farming Initiative by capturing and destroying harmful greenhouse gases released by cow manure under a new carbon farming methodology just released for public comment.



Credit: Carl Davies/scienceimage

'This methodology offers a new way for dairy farmers to earn tradeable carbon credits and also provides an opportunity to cut power bills by turning gas into a source of electricity or heat,' said Mark Dreyfus, Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

'The system involves putting a cover over manure ponds, which are commonly used by dairy farmers to manage liquid dairy manure produced in running their operation.

'Methane and other harmful greenhouse gases emitted by the effluent as it decomposes are trapped under this cover. These gasses are then either destroyed by burning them off, or via internal combustion engines and gas boilers which generate electricity and heat.'

Regional Australia Minister Simon Crean said the methodology had the potential to deliver both economic and environmental benefits to regional communities.

'Pricing carbon under the Government's Clean Energy Future Plan creates a market that rewards good behaviour – and regional communities can be big winners,' said Mr Crean.

'Regional communities have determined what needs to be done to reduce their carbon footprint, and our programs are helping them with the "how".'

'In Tasmania, for example, where the dairy industry is vital to the local economy, this methodology has the potential to

deliver an economic return in addition to the milk produced.’

Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Sid Sidebottom strongly encouraged dairy farmers to participate in the consultation process.

‘Farmers are very aware of the risk a warmer, more unstable climate poses to Australian agriculture and food production and this is an important economic and environmental opportunity for dairy farmers,’ he said.

‘The methodology, if approved, will reward dairy farmers who take steps to capture methane and generate renewable energy. I strongly urge all dairy farmers around Australia to participate in the consultation process and to take advantage of the opportunities that the carbon price will provide for their businesses and operations.’

Dairy farmers will be excluded from paying a direct carbon price on their emissions when the carbon price starts on 1 July. To minimise any increases in electricity costs, many dairies are already exploring steps to improve energy efficiency or shift to renewable sources of power.

Source: Federal Government

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