



The Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum

August 2004

AlpValleys Role

- To provide a voice for the North East Victorian Agribusiness Community
- To help develop regional agribusiness capability
- To promote investment opportunities in North East Victoria

Vision

Customers will prefer products and services from the Alp Valleys Region

Mission

- To ensure products and services from the Alp Valleys Region are better marketed than those of their competitors
- To assist producers develop organisations and systems to profitably market their products and services

Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum to Drive Blueprint for Region

The Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum has obtained funding through the State Government's Victorian Agribusiness Network program, to prepare a report on agribusiness in the North East that will become a major reference work for agribusiness in the region.

Member of the Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, Alan Hoppe, said this project has been much anticipated, as industry data collected in 1996 is now out of date and does not reflect the dramatic changes experienced in the region since that time.

“The aim of the project is to create an inventory of North East Victorian agribusiness as a blueprint for local business, government and potential investors in the region. The project will seek to identify the opportunities and impediments that face agribusiness in the NE and assist business and various levels of government to direct resources and develop new markets”.

Alan said he was looking forward to the involvement of all levels of the region's agribusiness to enable a comprehensive region-wide approach towards profiling the strength and future directions for agribusiness in NE Victoria. An important part of the information gathering will include a survey that will be sent out to farmers, value adding businesses, agribusiness service providers and others involved in agribusiness. AlpValleys asks everyone who receives the survey to fill out as much information as they can, as it will greatly assist in understanding the



needs of the region, and will ensure that the completed Profile is a useful tool.

The Regional Development Company along with MacroPlan Australia has been chosen to develop the 2004 regional agribusiness profile.

*Left:
Cool Cows.....*

*See article next
page*

COOL COWS RELAX IN ROBOTIC DAIRY

One of our Agribusiness Forum Board members has just returned from a visit to Israel, and he is all fired up with a range of new ideas. Alan Hoppe is Regional Director for ICM Agribusiness, based out at the company's large feedlot near Peechelba, north of Wangaratta, and he was impressed by the Israeli's ability to make the most out of limited resources. During the visit he saw tomato hothouses in one inch rainfall country growing 500Mt/ha of tomatoes, prickly pear fruit being de-spined prior to sale in Europe for \$10/kg and Australian barramundi being raised in concrete pens in the desert, using hot salty bore water.

Also of great interest was a robotic dairy which he visited. The cows were housed in a well ventilated shed set up with cooling fans that could spray mists of water into the air for evaporative cooling. Each cow was able to rest in a narrow stall with a sand base to chew her cud, and had ad lib access to a corn silage and grain ration via a feed bunk that ran around the perimeter of the shed.

The cows were fitted with radio transponders around their necks. When each cow went into the milking bale, she was given a measured amount of feed concentrate (pelleted grain based), with the amount being dependant on her recent milk production and calving status. The cows had free access to these small milking bales, not much bigger than a cattle crush and there were around 80 cows for each of these milking machines. When a cow felt the need to relieve the pressure on her udder, and to enjoy some pellets, she could enter the milking machine, any time of the day or night.

Average milk production in Israel and in Australia using conventional, twice daily milking is 8,000 litres per cow. By not forcing the cow to wait for milking at a time that suits the farmer, she can relieve the pressure in her udder more often, and average milk production is increased by over 30% to 11,000 litres per year. This is not all 'free' milk as the cows must eat a greater amount of ration to generate this amount of milk, however, the growing sophistication in genetics, electronic measurement and ration formulation means increased productivity is likely to continue and the average costs per litre will continue to decline.

WATER...YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MUCH!

The AlpValleys Forum has instigated the formation of a Land and Water Use Committee. This committee aims to form a North East Water Alliance, bringing together all authorities and farming organisations to develop a sustainable water use plan for the whole region for the next 50 years.

A workshop will be held in November to bring together stakeholders for this alliance and to develop a vision for sustainable irrigation development in the future.

The new committee has already notched up a major achievement. Campbell Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of Water Resources, DSE, was persuaded to visit the region recently, and gave a comprehensive briefing on the governments white paper on water in Wodonga last week. The briefing was attended by approx. 30 members of the Forum and NE Catchment Management Authority.

WINE....MAYBE YOU CAN HAVE TOO MUCH!

More than 120 people crammed into the function room of the Gateway in Wangaratta early June for the Wine Marketing Workshop, conducted under the auspices of AlpValleys in conjunction with The Centre. A grant from Regional Development Victoria enabled wine-makers from around NE Victoria to listen to the experiences and advice of 16 successful professionals in the wine industry, over the two day event. Speakers included well know wine writer Huon Hooke, and Robin Shaw of the Winemakers Federation of Australia. Delegates were given a wide range options for marketing their wine – at the cellar door, by mail order, on the domestic market, and overseas.

HORSHAM HOSTS FORUM SUMMIT

In late June, the 5th Annual Victorian Agribusiness Forum Summit took place in Horsham. Victorian Agribusiness Networks (VAN) is a government program which commenced April 2002. The Government has committed a budget of \$4 million over 4 years. There are currently 5 established Forums, such as the AlpValleys Agribusiness Forum, across Victoria, driving community needs. A further 3 forums are being developed in other regions.

The annual summit enables Forum members to come together to exchange ideas, share some of their experiences, and celebrate successes of individual projects.



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