

Lactalis Australia finds productivity success in environmentally sustainable practices

Facing growing calls for climate action, Australian agriculture and its associated industries including dairy, are increasingly looking for solutions to implement more sustainable, environmentally friendly practices.

This approach is reflected in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which covers key targets from increasing investment in rural infrastructure, research, and technology for greater productivity, to raising awareness on individual and group impacts on carbon reduction.

Contributing to the development of a sustainable production and distribution system is a top priority for Lactalis Australia, who are seeking to continuously improve their practices and achieve sustainability goals to ensure a better future for the company and broader dairy industry.

Specialising in dairy products owned and operated by the Lactalis Group, Lactalis Australia employs approximately 2,500 people and works closely with some 500 farmers to bring Australians some of their favourite brands, such as Pauls, Vaalia, Tamar Valley, Lemnos, and Oak.

A Lactalis Australia spokesman said it's critical that the business is continuing to evolve across its operation to reduce environmental impacts without sacrificing operational productivity.

"A great example is our Strathmerton staging facility which was set up in 2017 to collect and distribute milk in northern Victoria, which is Lactalis' major collection region in Australia," a Lactalis spokesman said.

"About 200 million litres of milk is collected in this region annually, of which 40 million litres is delivered direct from farms to our Bendigo site, with most of the remaining volume delivered to the staging facility for onward distribution.



"Each week, over 80 tankers are dispatched from the staging facility, which has become integral to balancing Lactalis milk volumes on the eastern seaboard."

The Lactalis spokesman said that in partnership with Booth Transport, one of Australia's leading milk transport companies, the company has been able to set up the staging facility so it now overdelivers operationally and provides outstanding environmental outcomes.

"The central location of the staging facility and its larger capacity have allowed truck movements to be reduced by over 1,400,000 kilometres per year, which is the equivalent of driving around Australia over 90 times. The facility remains productive and profitable whilst reducing the business' impact on greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

"The staging facility is also powered by a solar system which has produced over 1.5 gigawatts of power since commissioning it in 2017, the equivalent of preventing the generation of more than 1,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

“Booth Transport has also added infrastructure to manage the wastewater from cleaning tankers and silos; an Australian first bio-filtration based treatment plant which combines the use of worm farms to consume dairy proteins and capacitive deionisation, technology used to desalinate water.

“By 2019, the system was reducing biochemical oxygen demand by more than 99 per cent, which has produced 150,000 kilolitres of recycled water for irrigation and has reduced carbon emissions by 3,000 tonnes per year.”

In 2021, the staging facility also introduced an anaerobic digestion system for some of the waste streams created on site, this has led to the diversion of more than 200 tonnes of waste from landfill.

These sustainability gains are echoed in the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) commissioned Deloitte Access Economics report, *‘Economic and broader contribution of the Australian dairy processing industry,’* which provides an analysis of the industry’s contribution to the economy and regional communities.

The Report found that Australia’s dairy processing industry is making significant progress when it comes to sustainability and the environment while maintaining productivity, finding energy use in the industry has contracted by 24.5 per cent in the past three years despite milk processing volumes remaining stable. It also identified that in 2019-20, dairy processing generated 1.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, accounting for just 0.2 per cent of Australia total emissions.

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