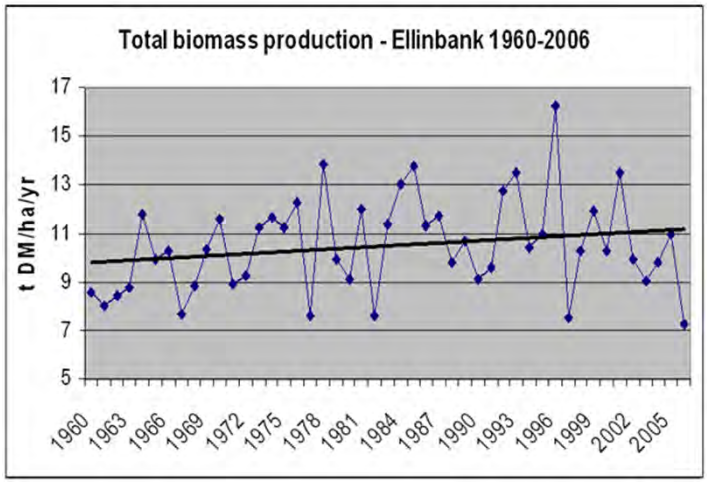
Future Ready Dairy Systems – SETTING THE SCENE

Scott Birchall
Regional Dairying for Tomorrow Coordinator – Murray Dairy

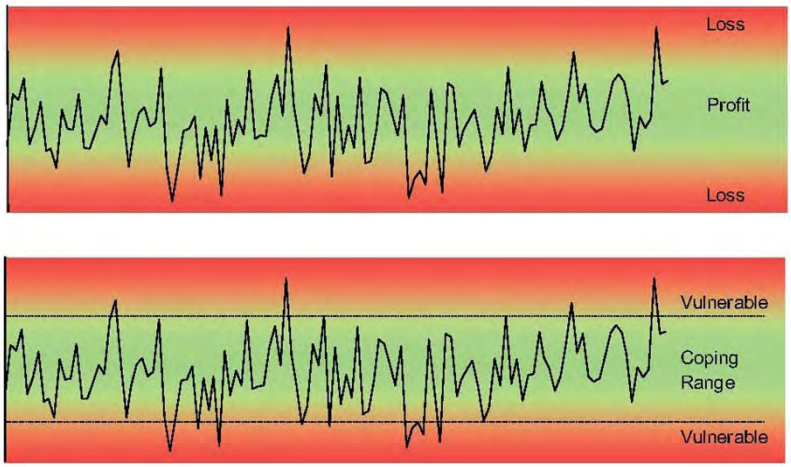
Climate change vs. variability (C2G 2009):

- The debate over climate change will be on-going because decades of hindsight are required to differentiate small changes to averages amongst the massive peaks and troughs of climate variability.
- **Managing climate variability is and always has been an essential part of sustainable dairy farming – by managing now for climate variability you are effectively managing for future climate change.**
- However, if climate variability increases as predicted, then the 'variability challenge' for dairy farmers will grow substantially faster than the 'averages' indicate.

Coping with variability (Dairy Climate Toolkit):



Coping range (CSIRO 2004):

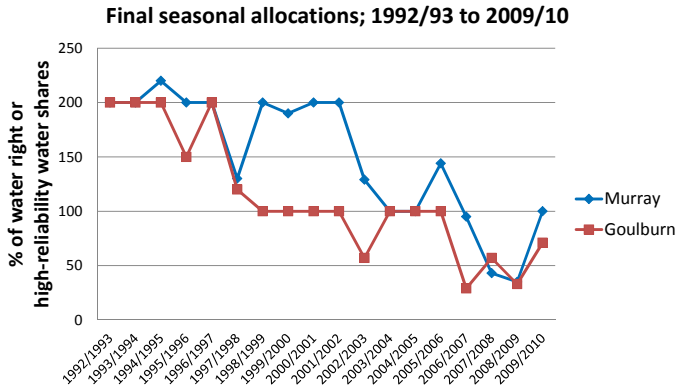


Adaption; increasing the coping range

– Adaption is about making farming systems more resilient to climate variability (moderate potential damages, to cope with the consequences, or to take advantage of opportunities).
– Unique conditions on each farm; difficult to identify 'blanket' adaption options to suit all farms in a region. Uptake of adaption options depends on farmers view of cost/benefit; individual circumstances differ.
– Vulnerability exacerbated by volatile commodity prices.

Example; historical seasonal water allocation

– Adaptive capacity to climate variability (eg SOI) is high but has been tested in recent years.



Example; historical seasonal water allocation

- *What strategies/technologies have helped some farmers cope with the reduced allocations better than others?*
- *Can we identify sites where those strategies/technologies offer lessons that others would be interested in (demonstration sites, case study materials, benchmarking)*
- *Document the what, how and why's of the change*
- *What are the challenges for/needs of those already making adaptions (what next)?*

Examples of adaption; coping with reduced water allocation

Depending on individual circumstances, combinations of:

- Upgrade irrigation technology (automation/high flow/pressurised & SSD irrigation etc) and improve management (reuse, scheduling etc) to improve water use efficiency
- Water trade, carryover water
- Alter mix and level of production (increase reliance on conserved fodder, more annuals, purchase feed)

Future Ready Dairy Systems – PLAN OF WORK

Scott Birchall
Regional Dairying for Tomorrow Coordinator – Murray Dairy

1st Milestone report

1 Nov 2010	**FRDS Progress Report addressing the following Key Performance Indicators** - Regional reference group established, operating and regional action plans submitted to the FRDS Steering Committee - Communication plan approved by RRG - Process for identifying local issues outlined - Regionally relevant strategies/technologies and tools to be 'demonstrated' identified and approved by RRG - At least 2 Demonstration farms (sites) selected - Evaluation plan for demonstration activities approved by RRG - Technical experts to support demonstration activities identified

Identifying local issues

– 'Kitchen table' forums to identify relevant strategies/technologies; 4 meetings (west/central, Riverina, central/east, NE), Scott B plus one other RRG member, invitation to 6 farmers each meeting (intend for this process to assist in generating possible demonstration farms), AND/OR

– RRG brainstorm

THEN

– Prioritise issues and select demonstration farms (at next FRDS meeting)

Regional action plan, communication plan and evaluation plan

– Will be prepared by Scott B, circulated prior to, and approved at the next FRDS meeting.

Budget – Murray Dairy

Establishment & coordination of a Regional Reference Group to steer the project (sitting fees for farmer representatives, consultants fees & operating costs)	**$10K over 2 years**
Assessment & benchmarking of the demonstration sites (choosing activities & sites)	**$2.5K per site over 2 years**
Ongoing technical support for demonstration sites (monitoring costs to ensure rigour of data)	**$6.7K per site over 2 years**
Demonstration site extension activities - field days, workshops, bus trips - 5 activities over 2 years	**$25K per site over 2 years**
Professional development workshops – for service providers/farmers	**$10K for region over 2 years**
Communication activities & materials (media, fact sheets, material for web sites, webinars)	**$10K for region over 2 years**
Technical support for YDDP and farmer discussion groups, a minimum of 3 activities	**$5K for region**

6th September 2010
DPI, Ferguson Rd Tatura

Future Ready Dairy Systems – Murray Dairy
Regional Reference Group Meeting

Program:

11.45 am	Arrival & fill a lunch plate	
12.00 pm	Overview & Objectives	Welcome & meeting objectives (Scott Birchall 10 mins) Background to FRDS (Cathy Phelps 15 mins)
12.25 pm	Setting direction/awareness of overlap with other projects	Setting the scene; coping with climate variability (Scott Birchall 15 mins) Update on relevant projects (Steve Little, Kevin Kelly, Lyndal Metcalf **up to** 10 mins each) Discussion
1.15 pm	Regional reference group	Acceptance of Terms of Reference Election of Chairperson
1.30 pm	Plan of work	Development of plans (Scott Birchall) • Process for generating a list of issues to address • Process for selecting demonstration sites • Budget and proposed activities Format/frequency for future RRG meetings
2.15 pm	Discussion	
2.45 pm	Close	

Attendees:
Cathy Phelps (Dairy Australia), Durham Prewett, Kevin Kelly, Steve Little, Troy Mauger, Lyndal Metcalf, Peter Gibson, Graham Willis, Ken Jones, Scott Birchall.
Apologies: John Furphy.