

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **SW Dairy farmers try to do right thing by environment**

Farmers in the Dairy industry in Victoria's South West are trying to do the right thing by the environment, a Deakin researcher has found.

Dr Mary Graham, from Deakin University's Faculty of Business and Law, who has just completed her PhD incorporating economic and environmental impacts of dairy farming into farm performance analysis, believes big is not necessarily bad.

"Dairy farms and dairy factories are getting bigger and I wanted to see if this was the way to go," Dr Graham explained. "As the industry is quite diverse I focused my study on dairy farming rather than manufacturing.

"As well as assessing the farms' economic impact, my research also looked at their environmental impacts. I used nitrogen leaching and runoff from each farm as a measure of environmental impact so things like soil, the slope of the land and the farming practices used on the farm were important."

Dr Graham talked to 24 farmers in the WestVic Dairy region, in south west Victoria. She obtained data over a four year period.

"Ultimately, the impacts of the farm, both from an environmental and an economic point of view, comes back to the farmer and how they manage things, not just the farm's size," she said.

"They and the industry are trying to do the right thing. There is a difficulty though when you introduce environmental considerations into performance analysis. Farmers can't be expected to look after the environment for us without giving them some assistance. "Such measures can impact on the economic performance of the farm." However, the farm extension activities offered through the DPI, dairy factories and WestVic Dairy are designed to provide the appropriate level of assistance to farmers.

Dr Graham believed the research also offered economists and scientists greater opportunity to collaborate on more related research.

"We can each acknowledge that we have something we can offer each other," she said.

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