

Question on Notice

No. 1121

Asked on 25 October 2022

MR S KNUTH ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to EastAUSmilk obtaining a \$200,000 grant from the Queensland Department of Agriculture towards a very popular program, where 15 farmers used devices designed to constantly monitor cow health to better manage sickness and fertility issues— Will the Minister extend this program to meet demand by increasing funding to \$400,000 over 2 years to target an additional 30 monitoring devices, which would have significant positive impacts for dairy farmers and animal welfare?

ANSWER:

The Digital Activity Monitoring Project aimed at providing better animal health management systems was one of nine projects across Queensland which received funding under Round 1 of the Agribusiness Digital Solutions Grant Program. As part of the Queensland COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy and Plan, \$1.045 million was invested across projects to assist the sector to accelerate adoption of digital solutions and share industry-wide learnings. This was a competitive process in which industry organisations could apply.

Projects identified by industry were put forward for co-funding under this Unite and Recover program. The Queensland Government supported the EastAUSmilk initiative due to the opportunity to enhance the development, trialling, and adoption of digital herd management technology by establishing demonstration sites across key Queensland dairy regions. Key outcomes of the project included:

- raising awareness about available digital technologies
- validating the benefit to animal health and welfare by having 24-hour monitoring capability
- demonstrating on farm-efficiencies
- encouraging producers to invest in herd monitoring technologies.

Early benefits through this investment have been seen with five regional workshops held to provide businesses with training on digital technologies, nine farms embracing digital herd management systems, and wide stakeholder involvement across key dairy regions.

The learnings from the use of smart collars in the paddock have helped the industry understand how the technology can be used to actively monitor and manage herd health, which has been key to overcoming some of the perceived barriers to adoption.

Dairy producers who are interested in investing in digital herd management technologies may be eligible to apply for a Sustainability Loan through the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority.

The possibility of future rounds is under consideration.