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NEWS FROM THE TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Winners of Tasmanian Dairy Awards announced

A Meander farming couple who transformed a poorly drained, low-fertility sheep property into a highly productive and sustainable dairy farm have been named the 2016 Tasmanian Dairy Business of the Year.

The award was announced tonight at the annual Tasmanian Dairy Awards, which are jointly presented by DairyTas and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA).

The winners and finalists of the 2016 Share Farmer of the Year, Dairy Safety Award, Dairy Environmental Award and Young Farmer Encouragement Award were also announced at the event.

The Tasmanian Dairy Business of the Year is awarded to the business that records the best overall results in the TIA benchmarking program, which measures financial and physical information such as costs (per cow, per hectare and per kilogram of milk solids), milk and feed production, labour efficiency and pasture utilisation.

The owners of the 2016 Tasmanian Dairy Business of the Year, Brian and Michele Lawrence, purchased 'Janefield' in 2007 and embarked on a detailed plan to redevelop the farm on a strong environmental sustainability foundation.

They made a commitment that every decision they make to improve productivity and efficiency must also contribute to their farm's sustainability, resulting in best practice for soil, fertiliser and herd management of their 930 crossbred cows.

TIA Dairy Development and Extension Team Leader Lesley Irvine said the Lawrences have been part of the TIA benchmarking program for the past three years and have been finalists in each of these years.

"Their attention to detail throughout the conversion to a dairy farm is evident everywhere you look on the farm," she said.

"In their first season on the property they milked 460 cows and produced 150,088 kg of milk solids and have now increased milk production to 400,163 kg of milk solids from 930 cows.

"Since the beginning Brian and Michele's aim has been to develop a profitable and sustainable dairy farm; they feel a responsibility to utilise the resources they have to efficiently produce food."

The 2016 Share Dairy Farmer of the Year went to Leigh and Kellie Schuurung, of Mella near Smithton.

DairyTas Executive Officer Mark Smith said DairyTas had introduced three additional awards to recognise excellence across all areas of the industry, including in workplace safety and natural resource management and to encourage the next generation of dairy farmers.

"The Dairy Safety Award highlights best practice management and procedures in farm safety, including training, record keeping and managing and assessing incidents," he said.

"The Dairy Environmental Award is awarded to a farmer or farming business that is committed to natural resource management and can demonstrate sustained improvement that contributes to the farm business.

"It is important that we celebrate dairy farming excellence in business performance, farm management, human resource management and environmental integrity to benefit the industry as a whole, especially in this time of growth.

"The Young Farmer Encouragement Award is awarded to a young farmer who is showing great potential and leadership within the Tasmanian dairy industry," Mr Smith said.

"This is the second year in which this award has been conducted and there has been a huge response. Young people are vitally important to our industry and it is important they are recognised and encouraged."

The full list of finalists and winners are listed below:

AWARD WINNERS

2016 Dairy Business of the Year

Winner

- Brian and Michele Lawrence, Janefield Dairy

Finalists

- Peter and Jo Jones, Limberlost Dairy
- Gary and Helen Strickland

Share Dairy Farmer of the Year

Winner

- Leigh and Kellie Schuurung

Finalists

- Stuart and Karen Burr
- Wayne and Caroline Saward

Dairy Safety Award

- Lion Dairy and Drinks - King Island Operations

Dairy Environmental Award

- Mark and Nikki Atkins

Young Farmer Encouragement Award

- Mark Griffin
- Zoe Brown

Field days will be held at the Lawrences' property on 21 April and the Schuurings' property on 26 April.

The Tasmanian Dairy Awards are sponsored by ANZ, Roberts, Ridleys, Legendairy, Alta Genetics Australia, Van Diemen's Land Company, Cadbury, Fonterra, CopRice, Tasmanian Perpetual Trustees, AgriTech, Bison, Labour Solutions Australia, LIC, Elphinstone Stevens, PGG Wrightson Seeds and Stephen Pasture Seeds.

TIA is a joint venture between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government.

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