

Jane Dyson – Q&A on the resilience of dairy farmers workshop



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In November 2017 EuroDairy pilot farmer Jane Dyson attended a two day workshop in France, that focussed on the resilience of dairy farming. Around 40 participants attended the workshop, from across Europe. We asked her a few questions on her return back to the UK to learn what her key take-home messages were.

What was your general impression of the workshop? Is it different from UK workshops you have previously attended?

The two day workshop saw dairy farmers, breeders and other industry professionals coming together to share their knowledge and ideas. I was great to talk with other dairy farmers from across Europe, it created a really participative experience and I took many ideas back home with me.

One thing that was different from the UK workshops I have attended was that we had a sit-down 2-course lunch with waiter service! This included a kick-off meeting for the French EuroDairy group, so included some “getting-to-know-each-other” social sessions. This provided a great opportunity to chat with people and find out where everyone was from and the challenges they were facing in different countries.

What were the main points of interest you took from the workshop?

For me, the most important take home messages was the importance of cost control and learning how to build and develop relationships between farms and the surrounding community

During the workshops, we identified four key interventions to make a business more resilient:

1. Deepen the resilience tools available to us and action levers
2. Work on production costs and compare to European benchmarking figures
3. Talk about management, employee management and work organisation on farms
4. Link to education and training future farmers

Is the concept of resilience different in France?

Yes. In France they focus a lot more on the socio-economic aspect; around keeping farmers farming, in spite of structural constraints (farm size, milk contracts, public perceptions of “large” farms, employment legislation). As a result, many resilience solutions are about business diversification, using the farm as a base for non-farming activities e.g. yogurt, ice-cream, visits, rather than developing the dairy farming business itself.

On what subjects do you think that UK farmers can help/ give advice the French farmers and vice versa?

UK farmers can help French farmers to better understand and make improvements to cost control (self-discipline), expansion, and working with employed staff (offering more training etc.). French farmers can help UK farmers to encourage more collaboration between neighbouring farmers, and having more fun!



Research Themes

EuroDairy drives the engine of innovations on 4 main themes at dairy farms: animal care, biodiversity, resource efficiency and socio-economic resilience. Find more info on these dairy topics here!

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