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PIGGIES BANK GREENHOUSE SAVINGS

A highly successful education and on-farm greenhouse gas mitigation program has yielded results above expectations for the Australian pork industry. Profitable reductions ranging from 3-84% of total on-farm emissions have been planned or achieved on individual piggeries.

Over the last two years, producers representing 24% of Australia's pork production have participated in workshops and one-on-one farm consultations as a part of the National PigGas Extension project, delivered by Ian Kruger Consulting. Baseline greenhouse gas emissions were calculated on participants' farms using the PigGas Calculator and mitigation strategies were identified.

The average potential to mitigate total on-farm greenhouse gas emissions across all piggeries was 54%. On a national basis, this is equates to a maximum abatement potential of 588,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per year. Mr Kruger, the principal consultant leading the project said "This is a good news story for agriculture. Nearly all pork producers could identify potential emissions savings. About half of those in the study have implemented some reduction strategies already, particularly where there was a clear financial return."

"For example, reducing feed wastage or increasing feeding efficiency by 5%, resulted in about a 10% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Modifying existing waste treatment and reuse systems could result in 15-25% emissions reductions. Housing pigs in deep litter pig sheds resulted in about 40% lower emissions compared with housing in conventional flushed sheds."

Mr Kruger highlighted that the maximum emissions mitigation was found in conventional piggeries that treated manure in covered anaerobic ponds or tank digesters. He said "These digesters capture and burn biogas methane to generate electricity for farm use and sales to the grid. In these cases, 75-84% of total on-farm greenhouse gas emissions could be mitigated and the emissions intensities fell from a calculated average of 4 to below 1 kilogram of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalents per kilogram of pork produced. Over 100,000 tonnes of CO₂ have been abated so far from these digester systems installed on over 10% of pork production. "

This substantial reduction in total emissions and emissions intensity is a win-win for producers who are taking action to manage conflicting environmental and productivity challenges, enabling them to take advantage of new income opportunities.

Some of the on-farm mitigation options such as reducing feed wastage resulted in direct cost savings, while other mitigation options such as covering ponds generated new farm income streams such as Australian Carbon Credit Units and electricity sales and offsets.

The pork industry is an agricultural leader in proactively mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

The National PigGas Extension project was funded by Ian Kruger Consulting, the Australian Government and Australian Pork Limited. The project is due for completion in May 2015.

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