

MEDIA RELEASE
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Kiwi demo farm will improve millions of lives: President of Colombia

The President of Colombia told those who attended the opening of the first NZ-Inc. dairy demonstration farm in the high tropics yesterday, that New Zealand's help in bringing best practice farming knowledge, animal and pasture genetics to Colombia will improve the lives of millions.

President Juan Manuel Santos opened Waikato farm development organisation Dairy Solutionz (NZ) Ltd's 117ha, 350-cow demonstration dairy farm in south Colombia yesterday (NZDT).



Left to Right: President Santos, Juan Lucas Restrepo – CEO of Corpoica, Paul Gibson – Farm Manager Dairy Solutionz (NZ) Ltd, Nelson Medina Farm Engineer Dairy Solutionz (NZ) Ltd

The farm is owned by Corpoica and situated in the Narino region of south Colombia 2800m above sea-level at which altitude the weather is a similar climate to the Waikato region.

“What we are doing today will have a great impact not just in the Narino region, but also the whole country, especially in our rural and dairy farming communities,” said President Santos at yesterday's opening.

“The New Zealanders are perhaps the most efficient producers of milk in the world, and we are working with them, in order to get the necessary knowledge, technology and good practices for our farmers and milk producers to become more efficient at a global level.”

Dairy Solutionz has been working in Colombia since 2012 and has been actively developing the demonstration dairy farm for the past 18 months.

“Having President Santos officially open our farm was a huge honour. It's a great endorsement for the Kiwis and Colombians working on the farm and others back here in New Zealand who have played a part in the establishment of this unique project,” said Dairy Solutionz chief executive Derek Fairweather.



The farm is the first demonstration dairy farm using New Zealand technology in the high tropics – 2800m above sea level – at which altitude the weather is very similar to the Waikato where rye grass and clover flourish.

The farm, which uses entirely New Zealand design and technology, employs Dairy Solutionz Kiwi farm manager Paul Gibson. The project directly benefits 14 New Zealand businesses through exports. The farm will also serve to establish proof of profitability, which will lead to increased technology exports in the future as these create value for Colombian farmers.

Corpoica chief executive Juan Lucas Restrepo will be in attendance at the 22 April opening. Late last year Mr Restrepo said he was certain the farm will be the catalyst for a step change in the competitiveness of the Narino region.

“We recognise New Zealand leadership in dairy technologies, breeding, pasture species and pasture management systems, and we need to prove that here in Narino. We look forward to and invite the partnership with New Zealand companies in supporting and adapting their intellectual property to the Colombian context.

“From our experience to date, we all have something to learn and we have great potential to realise between our two countries.”

Derek Fairweather says the Narino demonstration farm and others like it have potential to be one part of an answer to the issue of global food security.

“Securing enough food to nourish growing populations around the world is one of the top priorities for many governments, and we believe one of the answers to the food security issue is harnessing the untapped benefits of the world’s tropical environments.

“It just so happens New Zealand cows and pasture thrive in the high tropics. We’re using Kiwi ingenuity to take tropical land and create rich food bowls which will benefit largely poor rural economies,” he says.

New Zealand companies involved in supplying the Dairy Solutionz demonstration farm project are Leask Engineering, Read Industrial, Gallagher, TruTest Milkhub, TruTest DTS, Jobe Valves, Iplex Pipelines, LIC, Aghub, Shoof International, McKee Plastics, Harvest Electronics, Numedic and Dairy & Beef Solutionz Latam.

Dairy Solutionz is also active in Pakistan, Ecuador and America and currently has more than \$20m of tropical builds, and a similar value of tropical projects under development in the near future.

“At Dairy Solutionz we see our role as adapting New Zealand’s dairying expertise on a global scale and to help Colombia, and other similar nations, to be competitive in a fast-changing, competitive international food market,” said Mr Fairweather.

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How the project benefits local Colombian dairy farmers:

In the Narino region of Colombia, about 40 per cent of GDP currently comes from the dairy industry and about 400,000 families nationwide rely on the dairy industry for their livelihoods.

However, European free trade deals pose a major threat to the local dairy sector which will find it hard to compete with imported product once the current 33 per cent tariffs are lifted over the next 10 years.

\$4m in New Zealand Aid Programme funds, initiated by Dairy Solutionz, have been committed to be used to transfer technology and upskill rural professionals and farmers in Colombia.

Mr Fairweather said the development in Narino, Colombia will work towards helping local farmers and industry to become globally competitive.

“This will ensure there are major downstream benefits in terms of reducing poverty in the region and improving the local population’s health and welfare status,” he said.

“For the farmers we are working with in Colombia, dairying is how they support their families.

“But their livelihood is under threat by globalisation and free trade. Working with the Government of Colombia, this demonstration farm is a tangible message of hope and sets a clear pathway as to how they can be competitive.

“By transferring Kiwi technology into their local dairy economy, we are literally providing an economic lifeline to one of the most important yet impoverished dairy regions in Colombia.”

Obonuco dairy demonstration farm specifications

The Obonuco Dairy Project is located at an altitude of 2800m in the department (region) of Nariño which is located in the South of Colombia, in the Equatorial zone, on the border with Ecuador.

Size

- Area: 117 Hectares
- Stocking rate reached: 3.5 cows/ha. 350 cows.
- Rotational grazing reached: 25 day
- Sub-division: 55 paddocks – Approx.1.6 ha each.
- Cropping area reached: 5 paddocks/cropping-silage or research programme