



25 JAN, 2024

Seaweed feed scaled up

Stock Journal, Adelaide

Page 1 of 2

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SEAWEED feed supplement producer CH4 Global has major expansion plans both here in SA and internationally, with its asparagopsis-based products being developed to eventually suit intensive dairy and beef grazing operations.

The company was in the Mid North this week, delivering nearly 40 kilograms of their Methane Tamer product to SA food and protein manufacturer CirPro, which is supplying the 'methane-busting seaweed supplement' to beef feedlot partners HB Rural, owned by the Tiller family.

This will be the first commercial-sized use of Methane Tamer - which CirPro has exclusive access to - a product that has undergone some changes in the past 18 months, following feedback from initial pilot programs.

CH4 Australia general manager Adam Main said the company had improved the product's "color, taste, flowability, and general appeal to a cow".

"Seaweed in its raw form wasn't easy to use in the feedlot," he said.

"So we've added some secret off-the-shelf ingredients to improve shelf-life, retain its qualities, suppress dust and make it easier to use in a mixer."

Mr Main says the "Methane Tamer 2024 is still 97.5pc asparagopsis".

"It's now uniform in size,

clout, every mouthful has that methane reduction capability," he said.

"Fifty grams a day keeps the methane away."

HB Rural's Heath Tiller said he was excited about using the supplement across his 2500-head feedlot, after positive results from the pilot program.

"In that 'science' trial, we noticed the cattle ate a little bit less, but put on a little bit more weight gain - maybe 100-200 grams," he said.

"In a feedlot, it's those small percentages that make it worthwhile, and then the marketing advantages come later. I can't wait to see this new technology being used in a full pen to really gauge the numbers and take it to the next level."

Mr Tiller planned to incorporate the 50g/head/day into his feed ration immediately, with 140 head across two pens earmarked for a controlled and non-controlled weight comparison.

Mr Main said CH4 would also monitor the cattle during the next 100 days

"Although we are into commercial supply, that scientific approach doesn't stop now, it intensifies," he said.

CH4 Global chief operating officer Tim Williams said the company would

feed Methane Tamer to about 400-500 cattle this year, but then up to 6000 head next year when two other Australian agreements

- Ravensworth feedlot on the NSW Hay Plains and Lotte International's Sandalwood feedlot in Qld - "come online".

"But we have demand for millions of cattle," he said.

"It's just up to us to build out the capacity to grow."

Some of that growth will be aided by CH4's new \$20 million facility being built at Louth Bay on the Eyre Peninsula this year, but CH4 Global co-founder Steve Meller said while that was a "nice little business" servicing Australian clients, the company had global aspirations.

"Our business is everywhere in the world," he said.

"We have two pilot facilities, one here in SA (at Arno Bay), and one in New Zealand, and that

material will be supplied into local partnerships for the coming year.

"But that's not our goal. Our goal is global impact on climate change at scale, with urgency.

"One of those large scale customers is the entire country of South Korea, or 4 million cattle, in partnership with major global trading company Lotte International, which is headquartered in South Korea.

"We will be building a facility to serve that. We have yet to determine where, but that will supply South Korea.

"At the end of next month, we will announce a second location with another

global multibillion dollar agriculture company, who I can't yet name. The majority of that supply will be into South America.

"Again we have yet to decide where that will be manufactured, it could be here in SA. That will be determined in the coming month or so."

Dr Meller said while they were supplying beef feedlots, a dairy grazing formula was also in the works, expected to be ready by 2025.

"Potentially a bit more than a year after that, we aim to have solutions for the grazing beef market," he said.

"That one will be the hardest to do, as you don't see the cattle very often, and you have to figure out how to get it to them, so there's a lot more work to do."

When asked about the cost of the product, Dr Meller said it was more a question of value to the farmer.

"Depending on the markets they're in, farmers will see an increase in farmgate price; if you prevent methane burping out, you have the possibility of an increased feed efficiency with the same productivity; and there's value in the emissions that's reduced," he said.

"Soon there'll also be significant carbon taxes on agricultural products, just like those they're putting in place for steel and cement



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products - that could wipe out anybody's business that currently exports.

"So if you can bring your carbon impact down, by using this product, you may get access to a market that others may not.

"We will work with partners to figure out ways we can help to do that."

Dr Meller said this would not include individual farmers as such.

"We'd need a salesforce, and we're not doing that," he said. "Other companies may produce something that's on the shelf, but that's not for us.

"To get to scale, we plan to sell to somewhere like the entire country of South Korea - a major global corporation, who has their own supply chain. That's how

we've chosen to operate our business because we can get to a whole bunch of farmers through one partnership.

"But if farmers or groups in a region want to aggregate together, to have some meaningful number 50,000 to 100,000 cattle, that's a proposition we can work with."

While there was perceived demand from export markets, the goal was still to process the cattle from HB Rural locally, through CirPro's proposed Port Pirie abattoir.

Despite the abattoir being in the works since 2021, on Monday, CirPro chief executive Reg Smyth said "construction of our new processing facility will commence this year".

- ALISHA FOGDEN



CH4 Global co-founder Steve Meller with his asparagopsis-based feed supplement Methane Tamer and HB Rural owner Heath Tiller, who plans to use it in his 2500-head feedlot at Warnertown. Picture by Alisha Fogden