



Innovation Park gets new chair

COLIN WILLISCROFT

WAIKATO dairy farmer and DairyNZ director Michael Spaans has been appointed chairman of Innovation Waikato Limited (IWL), the organisation that runs the Waikato Innovation Park.

Spaans, who has been on the board for about three years, says he is honoured by the appointment.

He says the park is the best of its kind in New Zealand.

“Its focus is on growing this country’s agri-technology base through consolidation of like-minded commercial companies.”

Spaans says the board is looking to expand the number of companies at the park during the next five years.

He says the immediate beneficiaries of the park’s work are not necessarily farmers, although the technology it produces “will lead to products that may very well end up on New Zealand farms”.

“It’s real importance is to large and small agribusinesses throughout the greater Waikato region. We can help them find new markets and look at how they can create new exports.”

He says businesses involved form clusters in the park where they can work together on projects and be offered support.

Spaans says having companies grouped in one place is also helpful when dealing with overseas groups that need assistance in more than one area.

“Having everyone in the one place means we can offer complete dairy solutions to companies from overseas.”

Spaans paid tribute to outgoing chairman Andrew West, saying he oversaw a doubling of the park’s size and its diversification into the role of stimulating agri-technology exports.



Michael Spaans