

# Regional Workshop: Bega

Workshop Output Report



# Background

The Bega regional workshop is one of 23 regional workshops designed to contribute to the development of the Australian Dairy Plan – a nationwide plan for a profitable, confident and united dairy industry. This report captures the discussions held at that workshop. It is intended to provide a record for workshop attendees and a basis for those who could not attend the workshop to contribute to the conversation. This report will be combined with the reports of the other 22 regional workshops in the development of the Australian Dairy Plan.

## Workshop sessions

1. **The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?**
2. **How big is the appetite for change?**
3. **What needs to change?**
4. **What needs to be done?**
5. **What is success for the Australian dairy industry?**

## Workshop details

**Date:** 15 May 2019

**Location:** Bega

**Facilitator:** Michele Konrad, Nous Group

**Coordinator:** Dairy NSW

**Attendees:** Approximately 35 participants including around 22 farmers, 1 processor representatives and 12 service providers and others.

# 1. The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?

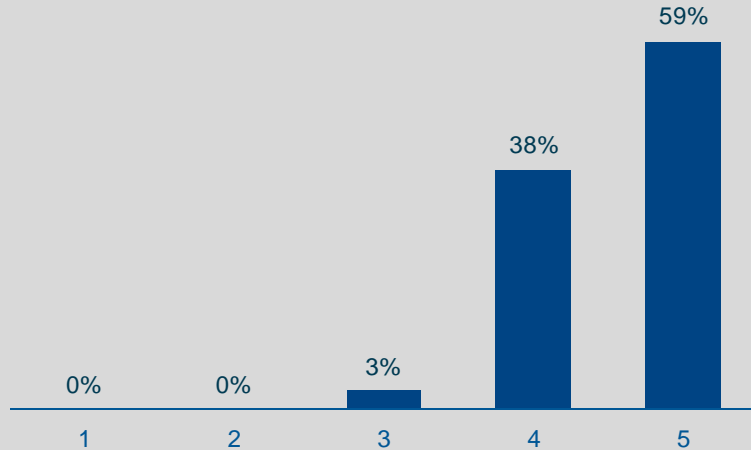
*The workshop was opened by local farmer Ashley Rood.*

## **The facilitator set out the purpose of the Australian Dairy Plan and the workshop**

- This is a great opportunity to shape the future of dairy by contributing to the development of the ADP
- But you've heard this before - what's different about this Plan? Why get involved?
- The key players are working towards one national dairy plan, one set of national priorities, one voice in championing these priorities – that gives us more ability to drive change
- This time the plan is being built from the 'bottom-up' i.e. by the people with 'skin in the game' – you!
- The partners are committed to turning the plan into action through their individual strategic plans

## 2. How big is the appetite for change?

Participants voted on “how much change is required to get the industry to a better place”



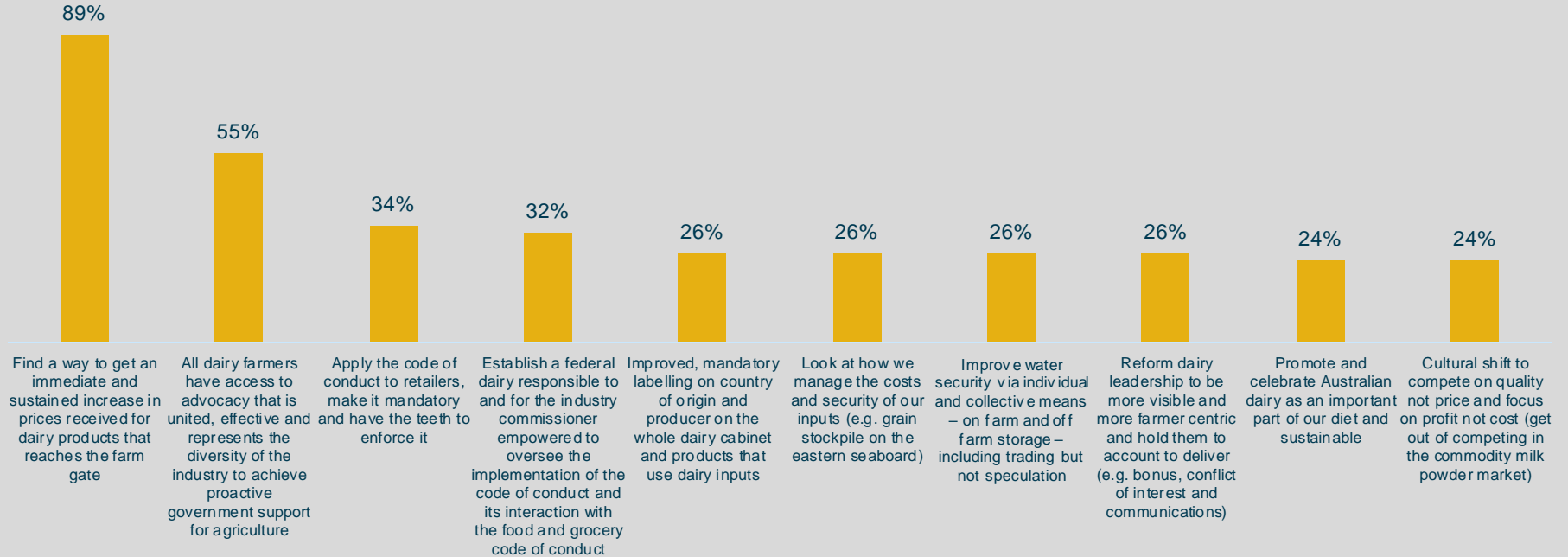
N=35

1 = minor change, 5 = major change

**In discussing the results, we agreed that major change is required to get Australian dairy back on track**

# 3. What needs to change?

Participants voted on “what needs to change?”



N=35

Top 10 ideas by percentage votes with participants voting on their top 5

# 4. What needs to be done?

We further developed our top five prioritised ideas by thinking about what success would look like, how we might get there and what might hold us back.

All dairy farmers have access to advocacy that is united, effective and represents the diversity of dairy to achieve proactive government support

Cultural shift to compete on quality not price, and on profit not cost: get out of competing with the international commodity milk market

Improve how we manage the costs and security of our inputs: including water and grain

Our industry organisations need to have a streamlined, accessible structure.

Leaders need to be accountable to us - all levy payers are automatically members of peak advocacy groups (state and federal).

We must remove any conflict of interest so that farmer representation is paramount.

In 2025 we will be a sustainable industry that is environmentally and financially viable.

To achieve this we need to stop trying to compete in the international commodity milk market. Instead, we need to compete on real sustainability (not just what looks good).

We need to be able to access water and grain/supplementary feed inputs affordably and use them productively.

Actions we can take including using contracts to manage price risk, reducing reliance on processed feed and increasing water storage capacity.

There is a risk that we could be held back by a lack of capital to invest.

## 4. What needs to be done? cont.

Apply the code of conduct to retailers and processors, make it mandatory and have the teeth to enforce it

Retailers and processors would operate under a mandatory code of conduct that makes them recognise the impact of their decisions on farmers.

Getting there will require better representation from farmers in negotiation and will require processors to 'step up' on our behalf in their negotiations with retailers.

At the moment, a lack of a united voice could hold us back from this goal.

Find a way to get an immediate and sustained increase in prices received for dairy products that reaches the farm gate

By 2025 we will have the majority of farmers achieving a sustainable milk price.

We will be filling our own fridges at home and then exporting high value-added dairy products overseas.

Getting there will require better marketing of our dairy products and their quality, limiting imports from countries with lower quality standards, stronger negotiations from processors to retailers and changes to expand the Trade Practices Act.

## 5. What is success for the dairy industry?

Imagining the future of the industry, we articulated our vision by developing the front page of the industry newspaper.

# THE DAIRY TIMES

June 2025

**In this issue, we look at dairy's journey to 2025 & celebrate the people and successes that have got the industry to where it is today.**

The dairy industry has changed a lot since 2019. Now we see more people, more product, more prosperity. It is clear this is a united industry that has faced its challenges head on.

“ It's great to be able to be proud to leave a profitable business to my son, his family and their kids

”

- Dairy farmer

“ The dairy industry now provides us with a security of supply that allows us to maximise our business assets and provide an increased farm gate price.

”

- Processor

“ The Government supported the Dairy Plan of 2020 implementing necessary changes to support our farmers. The industry is now growing and sustainable.

”

- Minister for Agriculture & Water Resources



# Appendix. What needs to change? (full list of results)

Find a way to get an immediate and sustained increase in prices received for dairy products that reaches the farm gate

More support given to our industry through protection

Promote and celebrate Australian dairy as an important part of our diet and sustainable

Educate the Australian consumer on the value dairy farmers create through their knowledge, skills and best practice

Improved, mandatory labelling on country of origin and producer on the whole dairy cabinet and products that use dairy inputs

All dairy farmers have access to advocacy that is united, effective and represents the diversity of dairy to achieve proactive government support

Promote our environmental credentials

Look at how we manage the costs and security of our inputs

Provide support (information and money) to manage climate change's effects on our industry including our emissions, changing climate etc

Link our research, actions and financial incentives to what customers and communities want, now and into the future

Get on the front foot on animal welfare and link this to farmers' success

Find a way to protect regional diversity of production systems across Australia

Standardise processor templates so farmers can compare

Restructure ADF to ensure that all dairy farmers can vote on ADF policy directly as levy payers

Improve water security via individual and collective means – on farm and off farm storage – including trading but not speculation

Cultural shift to compete on quality not price and focus on profit not cost (get out of competing in the commodity milk powder market)

Apply the code of conduct to retailers, make it mandatory and have the teeth to enforce it

Reform dairy leadership to be more visible and more farmer centric and hold them to account to deliver (e.g. bonus, conflict of interest and communications)

Give farmers transparency in how funding is raised and spent and a say on where to direct it

Understand the long term impacts and benefits of increased automation on farm employment

Provide more support to implement R&D on the farm

Better connect farmers with best practice and research

Promote transparency in the financial disclosures processors make to dairy farmers e.g. standardised templates (this is a component of the code of conduct)

Find a way to link price received to the productivity of the farm – a different pricing structure at the farm gate to reward effective, well-managed farms

Protect farmers from the impacts of animal activists

Establish a federal dairy commissioner empowered to oversee the implementation of the code of conduct

Ensure levies can be used for advocacy

Expand Gardiner Foundation's brief to cover all of Australia