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State farmer groups back Australian Dairy Farmers restructure

For immediate release

State farmer groups today backed the restructure of Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), voting in a new constitution for the national organisation.

The 'yes' vote opens the way for a slimmed-down ADF board to focus on strategy and a new National Council to provide policy recommendations. Individual farmers can now be members of ADF for the first time.

"It is a very exciting development for dairy farmer representation in Australia," said ADF President Chris Griffin. "A more financially efficient and better structured ADF will deliver improved value to farmers and state organisations."

Mr Griffin said changes in the dairy industry have impacted on the financial viability of ADF. Over the past 30 years milk production has doubled but the number of dairy farmers has dropped by two-thirds. This has hit the membership levels and income of State Dairy Farmer Organisations and ADF. ADF is now operating in deficit and without significant change could not continue to function or deliver quality policy and advocacy services for dairy farmers.

ADF's new Constitution includes:

- A smaller board focussed on strategy and oversight of ADF operations
- A new National Council – a state representative body providing input on strategic direction and policy matters
- ADF Policy Advisory Groups open to grass-roots farmers selected for expertise and interest
- The organisation is close to security processor investment in whole-of-industry policy or advocacy issues through the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), sharing the cost and providing a consistent industry voice.

"Any dairy farmer who is a member of their State dairy body may join ADF directly for no additional charge. The farmer can be confident that at no additional cost to the State fee they are paying now they will receive State and national representation as well as a strong dairy voice at the NFF," Mr Griffin said.

The move improves farmers' direct access to ADF. While farmers who want to join ADF still have to be members of their State organisations, they can now communicate directly with ADF on national issues.

State and individual farmer members can attend ADF annual general meetings and, in future, any farmer can stand for the ADF Board provided they are a member of both their State dairy body and ADF. All ADF farmer members will be able to vote on the election of Business Directors.

"The most exciting element of the change is the fact that ADF will now be accountable directly to dairy farmers. I encourage all dairy farmers to join ADF through their State organisation," Mr Griffin said.

"This change is evidence of a true partnership approach by ADF and our State members. I thank them for their commitment to the process. I also thank Noel Campbell, who chaired the restructure committee, and CEO Natalie Collard for their vision and efforts to secure a better future for ADF.

"I commend the outgoing ADF Board for its ability to act for the greater good, despite the fact that most members will no longer be directors under the new model."

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