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Proposed dairy levy change frees up cash, time: ADF

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For immediate release

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) is urging support from dairy levy payers' for recommendations to streamline the dairy levy process, and to opt for a levy poll only when a change in the levy is being sought.

ADF has suggested the change, based on the recommendations of the independent Dairy Levy Poll Process Review panel, commissioned following Dairy Australia's 2014 Annual General Meeting. The panel concluded that there are big cost-savings and operational efficiencies gained by making this change.

"After the last poll in 2012, the clear message from Australian dairy farmers was that the efforts and funds dedicated towards the poll process could have been better spent delivering dollar value to dairy farmers," said ADF President, Noel Campbell.

"It makes absolute sense, and the six-member panel recommendation was unanimous: we only vote when a change is proposed."

Mr Campbell stressed the panel recommendation included a "failsafe" mechanism. If farmers believe a poll is necessary, they can initiate one by bringing together a group of levy payers representing at least 15 per cent of levy votes. This would activate a Dairy Australia General Meeting where 50 per cent of voters would need to resolve to hold a poll.

"This proposal is not about removing Dairy Australia from scrutiny. This is about a direct saving of at least \$750, 000 that can instead go directly to industry benefit," he said. That's why ADF supports it, and why we believe dairy levy payers should also support it."

The panel's considerations included research conducted by Dairy Australia with levy payers after the 2012 poll, feedback from industry groups, public submissions and direct conversations with farmers in dairy regions around the country.

Mr Campbell said the industry must endorse to the Federal Government the changes to the levy poll, which would require amending the Dairy Produce Act and its regulations.

"That means achieving consensus, and ensuring we've consulted widely and well with levy payers on this matter, and also conducted a simple vote to demonstrate the merit of the proposal. This has to be wrapped up before the end of this year."

ADF will provide farmers with the opportunity to discuss the recommendations at regional meetings over the next two months. *The report of the independent panel is at www.dairylevypollreview.com.au*

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