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ADF seeking assurances on new visa arrangement

For Immediate Release

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) is seeking assurances that there will not be any changes to the Dairy Industry Labour Agreement, under the new visa arrangements announced yesterday.

Interim ADF CEO, John McQueen said access to skilled workers was essential to the continued growth and productivity of the dairy industry, yet there is still a critical shortage of skilled dairy farm workers.

“The dairy industry relies on skilled migration to bolster its workforce and help our farmers with critical labour shortages.”

“Our preference is always to hire Australian workers, but there are not enough experienced workers to meet the demand.”

“Many dairy employers rely on skilled overseas workers to fill core on-farm roles due to the lack of available local labour”, said Mr McQueen.

Under the template agreement finalised with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on 17 July 2015, dairy farmers can recruit skilled senior farmhands from overseas on 457 visas, as well as farm managers.

The dairy industry has been investing heavily in recruitment, training and retention programs since 2006, and will continue to do – being able to recruit overseas is just another option for farmers to meet demand in the short to medium term.

“We are concerned that instead of addressing farmers worries and streamlining the application process, the Government’s changes could mean more red tape by placing an even greater administrative burden on farmers,” said Mr McQueen.

Mr McQueen said more detail on the Government’s new visa program was required and ADF will be consulting Government on the changes.

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Australian Dairy Farmers Limited (ADF) is a not-for-profit organisation representing the interests of Australian dairy farmers. We are a strong collective voice to Government and the community on national issues affecting dairy farmers and their profitability. The ADF has a long history of successfully lobbying for the rights of dairy farmers on many fronts – including trade, value chain, water, carbon and animal health and welfare issues.