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Dairy industry scores greater access to vital skilled labour

For Immediate Release

DAIRY business owners are one step closer to securing a permanent skilled workforce with the federal government amending its occupation classification list to make it easier for farmers to attract experienced and skilled overseas labour.

Under changes to the Australian Skilled Occupation List, high level dairy farm managers who have responsibility for overseeing farming operations are eligible for the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa entry to Australia for up to four years with the possibility of renewal and permanent residency via the 187 visa.

Peak dairy farmer group Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) praised the outcome after the organisation last year pushed for an overhaul of the occupation classification system.

“The experience of regional communities around Australia is that migrant farmers not only fill labour shortages, but they also bring with them new technological insights gained overseas to apply to Australian farming and revitalise local communities,” ADF President Terry Richardson said.

“The pathway to permanent residency is vital to ensuring Australian dairy farmers can attract skilled overseas workers who will avoid Australia if they can obtain permanent residency in other countries.”

The changes will apply to migrant workers on TSS visas who have an undergraduate qualification or at least five years’ experience.

The TSS visa for short and medium-term employment last year replaced the 457 visa stream, which had been used to recruit skilled overseas labour.

ADF argued to the government that dairy businesses were losing up to \$364 million each year in employee turnover as a result of the industry’s labour shortage crisis.

“Dairy farmers need reliable access to skilled overseas workers and it’s pleasing to see the government amend its job classification system to reflect the modern reality of the dairy industry,” Mr Richardson said.

“The dairy industry is taking positive and comprehensive steps to address the widespread skills shortage in the dairy industry, and this is one of a range of measures that will address the problem.”

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