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**Dairy industry urges political support for gene technology**

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**For Immediate Release**

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AUSTRALIA'S dairy industry is urging Canberra to pass amendments to gene technology regulations as planned to ensure the recommendations of the science-based Australian Gene Technology Regulator (AGTR) are implemented across the country.

The Senate will today vote on a motion tabled last month by Greens Senator Janet Rice to disallow the *Gene Technology Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Regulations*, which would deregulate certain gene editing techniques (SDN-1), despite thorough risk assessment by the AGTR.

Peak dairy farmer group Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) criticised the move as a reckless attempt to weaken the dairy industry's profitability.

"The dairy industry sees significant opportunities from the use of new gene editing techniques to improve the pasture-based dairy production system," ADF President Terry Richardson said.

"The gene edit 'delete' technique used by plant breeders in our industry, carries no risk to humans or the environment because it mimics natural mutations.

"Plant-breeding techniques that carry the same risk should be regulated the same way. SDN-1 should be deregulated.

"A strong, science-based gene technology regulatory scheme is critical to ensure the safe and responsible use of science and the safety of the community and the environment."

The decision of the AGTR is science-based and commensurate with risk. New elite pasture varieties are predicted to add significant value to the dairy production system at a time when the industry is increasingly concerned about improving productivity and profitability.

The *DairyBio* program, including the gene edit 'delete' technique, involves developing new ryegrass which ADF argues could be a value gamechanger for the dairy industry, targeting \$800-1000 per hectare a year of benefit to farmers.

The Australian Academy of Science and Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering have also jointly written to Senator Rice opposing the disallowance motion.

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