

Regional Workshop: Finley

Workshop Output Report



Background

The Finley regional workshop is one of 23 regional workshops designed to contribute to the development of the Australian Dairy Plan – a nationwide plan for a profitable, confident and united dairy industry. This report captures the discussions held at that workshop. It is intended to provide a record for workshop attendees and a basis for those who could not attend the workshop to contribute to the conversation. This report will be combined with the reports of the other 22 regional workshops in the development of the Australian Dairy Plan.

Workshop sessions

1. **The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?**
2. **How big is the appetite for change?**
3. **What needs to change?**
4. **What needs to be done?**
5. **What is success for the Australian dairy industry?**

Workshop details

Date: 5 June 2019

Location: Finley Returned Soldiers Club, 63-67 Tocumwal St, Finley

Facilitator: Stephen Petris – Nous Group

Coordinator: Murray Dairy, UDV

Attendees: 23 participants, including 14 dairy farmers, as well as service providers and representatives from UDV and Dairy Australia.

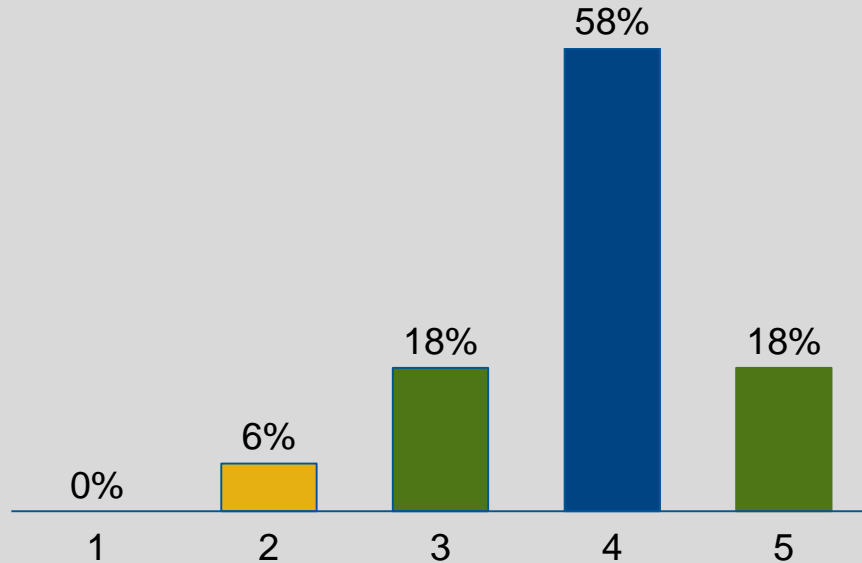
1. The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?

The facilitator set out the purpose of the Australian Dairy Plan and the workshop

- This is a great opportunity to shape the future of dairy by contributing to the development of the ADP
- But you've heard this before - what's different about this Plan? Why get involved?
 - The key players are working towards one national dairy plan, one set of national priorities, one voice in championing these priorities – that gives us more ability to drive change
 - This time the plan is being built from the 'bottom-up' i.e. by the people with 'skin in the game' – you!
 - The partners are committed to turning the plan into action through their individual strategic plans

2. How big is the appetite for change?

Participants voted on “how much change is required to get the industry to a better place”



N=17

1 = minor change, 5 = major change

In discussing the results, we agreed...

Why we need to change:

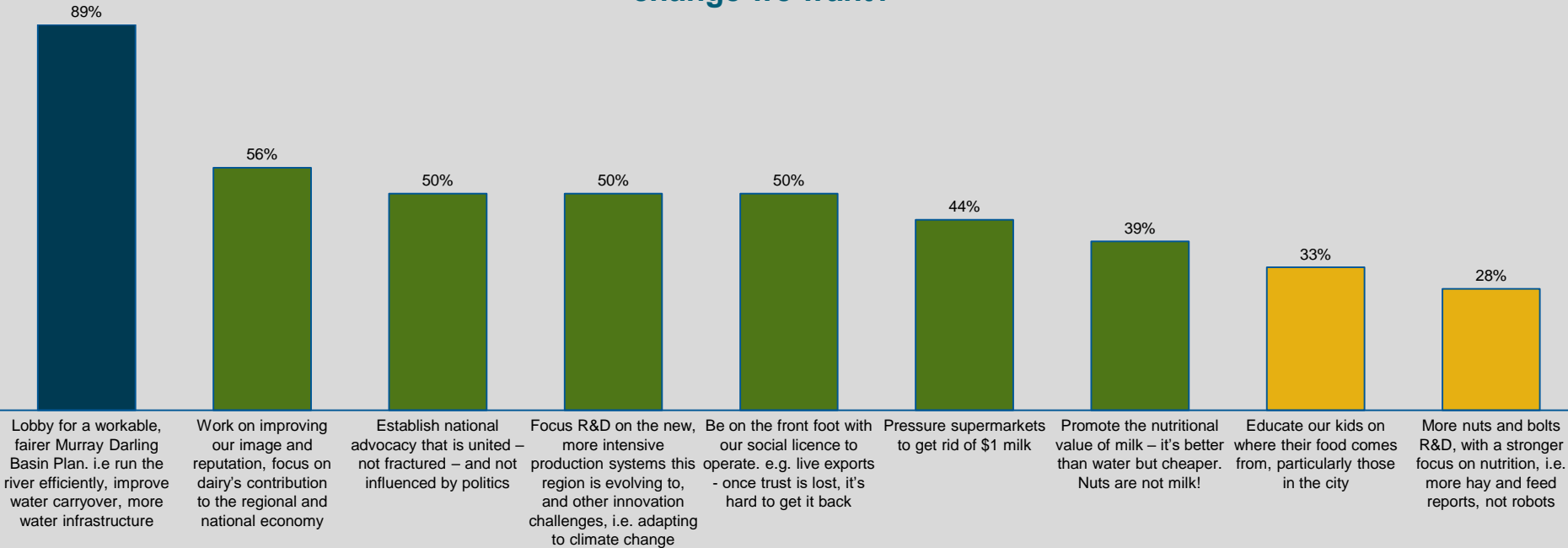
- If something doesn't happen, there will be no one left farming in our region. Everyone is exhausted – it feels like every decision we make in this region is wrong. It's become extremely difficult to make a living here – we can break even, but it's hard to get ahead.
- Our farming systems have been tipped upside down compared with 20 years ago. The change has been rapid, with large costs associated with it.
- There's been a big exodus in the region. Nearly every farmer came here because of reliable water. It's a magnificent area to farm, but we can't farm without water.
- We need to change the perception of dairy and promote positive stories. We need to encourage younger people to get involved in dairy farming.
- There is low trust across the whole industry – more now than ever.
- Our dairy organisations are not working for us. We need to get value for our levy.

On the other hand:

- There may be only a few things that need to change (albeit large things).
- Historically, this has been a good industry for the creation of wealth.
- We do have good relationships e.g. Murray Water have found some ways to support us.
- There is a good 'togetherness' in dairy – very different to other agricultural industries.
- We have seen some good programs come out of Dairy Australia – ESKi and the farm safety manuals for example. Murray Dairy has also done a lot for our region – without their support we couldn't do a lot of what we are doing.

3. What needs to change?

Participants voted on “where should we be focusing our efforts and energy to get the change we want?”



N = 18

Top 9 ideas by votes, as a percentage of participants voting on their Top 5

4. What needs to be done?

We further developed our top 5 prioritised ideas by thinking about what success would look like, how we might get there and what might hold us back.

Lobby for a workable, fairer Murray Darling Basin Plan

- More water available for irrigation – everyone needs to be in agreement for change, e.g. all agriculture, cropping, dairy, horticulture etc.
- Establish an independent umpire to oversee the river operation to increase transparency and security of water assets.
- Institute several improvements, including building more water infrastructure, better Barmah choke management, and the limiting carryover to those who actually use water.
- We need to get speculators out of the market.
- Needs political pressure for change – currently there are too many noses in the trough, profiting from dairy (speculators).

Work on improving our image and reputation

- Dairy should be profitable for everyone to encourage new entrants into the industry.
- We need to actively promote the value of dairy – nutritional value, the economic contribution, the opportunities for wealth creation.
- It needs to be a united message, with politicians working for greater good of industry.
- A campaign focused on eating local, not imported, to reduce carbon footprint and support local farmers.
- Promote the clean, green, nutritional value of dairy products and our quality assurance programs.

United, well financed national advocacy

- One united voice that advocates for dairy farmers that is financed by farmers, with broad representation and voted by farmers. All current organisations to come under the one umbrella but still value each and every member.
- It needs to be well led – look at ways of providing support to farmer representatives through training etc.
- It should focus on effective communication back to farmers for the good of the whole dairy industry.

4. What needs to be done?

Customers need to value dairy more – we need to better educated the consumer

Focus R&D on new, more intensive farming systems

- Focus R&D on educating and improving skillsets to operate systems 4 and 5.
- Undertake analysis on the investment prioritisation process to ensure it is focused on innovation and technology that will future proof the industry, i.e. adapting our feed-base to climate, water sustainability, double cropping etc.
- More investment in building skillsets and capabilities to manage these systems (farm managers), i.e. on cow health, feed and nutrition, staff management, reproduction, feed-bases and risk management.
- Encourage a skilled service sector to support these systems.

Be on the front foot with social licence to operate

- Implement and promote best practice to farmers in animal welfare to ensure the industry is not only perceived as doing the right thing, but that it is.
- The focus should be on practices and approaches to dehorning/polled calves, cow-calf separation, lameness, mastitis, euthanasia, bobby calves, use of sexed semen, beef, phasing out induction, opening dairy beef markets.
- Promote our good story to consumers and the public – a few bad apples doing the wrong thing gives the whole industry a bad image.

Appendix. What needs to change? (full list of results)

Participants completed a survey on the workshop

- Lobby for a workable, fairer Murray Darling Basin Plan. i.e. run the river efficiently, improve water carryover arrangements, build more water infrastructure
- Work on improving our image and reputation, focus on dairy's contribution to the regional and national economy
- Establish national advocacy that is united – not fractured – and not influenced by politics
- Focus R&D on the new, more intensive production systems this region is evolving to, and other innovation challenges, i.e. adapting to climate change
- Be on the front foot with our social licence to operate. e.g. live exports – once trust is lost, it is hard to get it back
- Pressure supermarkets to get rid of \$1 milk
- Promote the nutritional value of milk – it's better than water but cheaper. Nuts are not milk!
- Educate our kids on where their food comes from, particularly those in the city
- More nuts and bolts R&D, with a stronger focus on nutrition, i.e. more hay and feed reports, not robots
- We need an organisation that can lobby and fight for a better price. Consider constitutional change to Dairy Australia
- Get more frankness into the messaging from our dairy organisations, don't tell us the 'blue-sky' story when it's not true
- We need more transparency in everything we do, i.e. mandatory codes of conduct, technology to help understand contracts
- Change the discriminatory nature of the Farm Household Allowance, and similar subsidies
- Educate consumers about what an Australian dairy farmer has to do to put products onto Australian tables – highlight that we have more hoops to jump through than other countries
- Work for a fairer trading environment and better international trade agreements