

Regional Workshop: Smithton

Workshop Output Report



Background

The Smithton 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: 12 June 2019

Location: Smithton

Facilitator: Michele Konrad, Nous Group

Coordinator: Dairy Tas

Attendees: approximately 50 people including around 40 farmers.

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

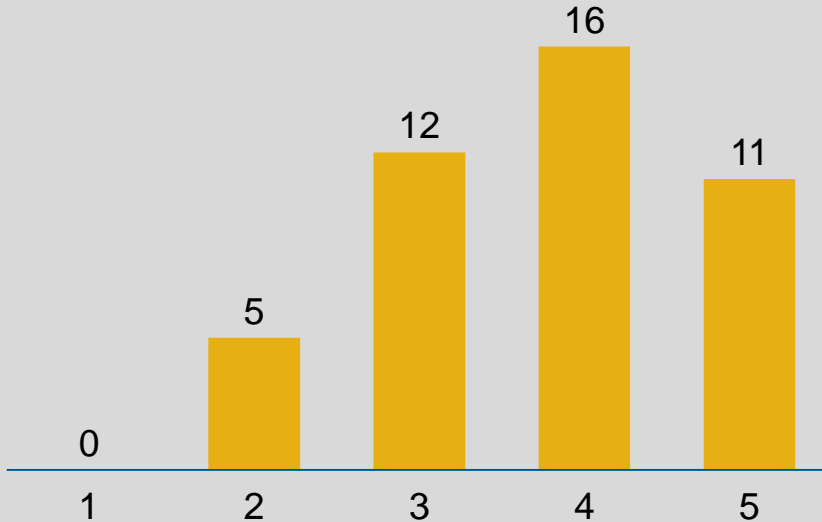
The workshop was opened by local farmer Angelique Kopershoek

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=44

1 = minor change, 5 = major change

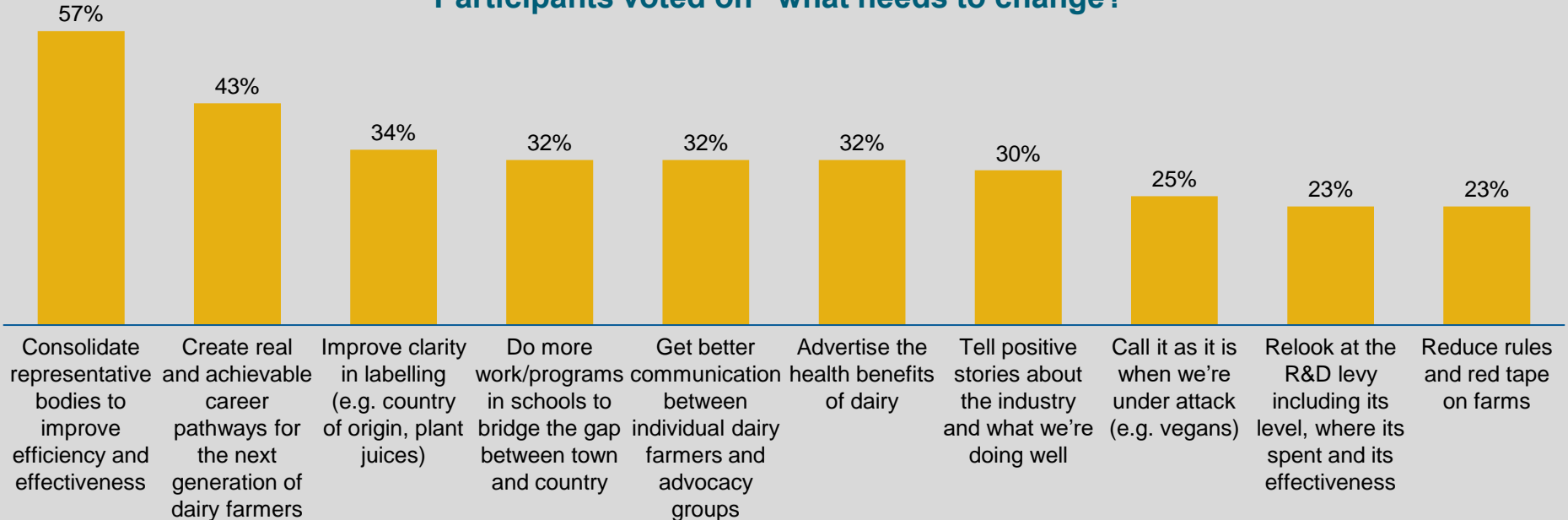
In discussing the results, we agreed...

Some of us want to see significant change, either because we have a strong appetite for change, or because we know we need to call for significant change in order to see any action.

However, some of us cautioned against major change noting that, while there is always change in the industry, it's important not to throw everything out and, when change is too quick mistakes can be made and people can head down the wrong track.

3. What needs to change?

Participants voted on “what needs to change?”



N=44

Top 10 ideas by percentage votes with participants voting on their top 5

4. What needs to be done?

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

Advertise the health benefits of dairy (including to children)

By 2025 we expect to be known as the producers of the number one health food in Australia.

We need to change public perceptions by marketing the health benefits of dairy. This could include using athletes shown drinking milk instead of sports drink.

Get better communication between farmers and advocacy groups

We recognise that if you want the Australian Dairy Plan to work then you must communicate with farmers. This means talking to farmers not 'at' them.

We could be held back by attitudes from all.

Tell positive stories, clearly stand up and say what we're doing well

We want to see dairy farmers proud of their industry and what they do. We want to see the industry have a good image on animal welfare and environmental performance.

Getting there will require us to celebrate the champions and quiet achievers of the industry.

We could be held back by tall poppy syndrome and negative media stories.

4. What needs to be done?

Consolidate representative bodies to improve efficiency and get them working effectively together

By 2025 we want to see effective, uniform messages from the farm gate through a single advocacy body for the industry.

Getting there will require more funding from DA towards advocacy and will require farmers to get involved in advocacy.

We risk being held back by fractured groups and the ability to secure adequate funding.

Create real and achievable career pathways for the next generation of dairy farmers

We want to see the average age of a dairy farmer come down and more people in the industry achieving farm and cow ownership.

Solutions to achieve this could include making cheap loans available and remodelling corporates so 350 cow farms can be run by sharefarmers or people with skin in the game.

Improve clarity in labelling e.g. country of origin, nut juices, health star ratings

Achieving improvements to country of origin labelling will require government regulations on labelling and 'milk' classification. We will also have to make efforts to educate people on the benefits of milk (as compared to other 'milks') and differentiate the Australian 'brand' from other countries.

We will need to overcome challenges such as the cost of products against imports, alternate 'milk' sources and "do gooders".

4. What needs to be done?

Do more work/programs in schools – include visits to farms

By 2025 we want to see:

- Primary schools focus on the broad value of agriculture and career ideas
- Secondary schools focus on subject areas (STEM) and hands on experience and work experience.

Achieving this will require us to value education, inspire educators and use farmers as advocates for our industry.

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

Consolidate representative bodies to improve efficiency and get them working effectively together

Create career pathways for the next generation of dairy farmers, make them real and achievable for people and create opportunities for people to get 'skin in the game', then promote careers in the industry

Improve clarity labelling – country of origin, don't allow plant juices to be labelled as milk, health star ratings

Do more work/programs in schools to make dairy the industry of choice – include visits to cropping farms, dairy farms etc – show them what it's really like – bridge the gap between town and country

Get better communication between individual dairy farmers and advocacy groups so they are higher-profile and more proactive and we know what they're doing

Government to provide low-cost loan for younger people who have already proven themselves to get ahead – extend the existing program including to buy cows

Tell positive stories about the industry - really clearly and strongly stand up and say what we're doing well

Call it as it is when we're under attack (e.g. vegans) – we need an organisation that's prepared to stand up and be counted

Advertise the health benefits of dairy (including to children)

Reduce rules and red tape on farms – have a one off one on rule for new requirements

Improve profitability so we can employ people under good pay and conditions (for employees and owners)

Dairy Australia or the peak body to be on the front foot when something goes wrong (e.g. veganism/tail docking) and to improve communication about the good things they have

Make sure that the dairy industry always has a milk price that pays our bills – consider a minimum milk price floor (ACCC approval)

Have a look at Dairy Australia – consider board membership, structure, accountability, farmers participation, and reporting back to farmers on how levies are spent

Develop a group or a body to go around and speak to successful people in this industry and share their stories - including in the media and on social media

Take legal or political action to get a more level playing field between corporate farms and family farms in their contracts with processors and contractors

Find a way to increase the power that farmers have over their products beyond the farm gate

Make sure the Australian Dairy Plan is implemented

More information to the consumer

Change the image of our industry publicly and in the media – it's not about small farms, it's highly professional, bigger herds

Tell stories on our products (warm and fuzzy)