

Media Release



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Basin Plan must change to ensure dairy jobs

The United Dairy Farmers of Victoria (UDV) believes the Murray Darling Basin Plan must urgently change to ensure the dairy industry has some certainty and confidence to create the jobs needed to help Australia recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dairy is a major industry in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, with 1200 farms producing 2 billion litres of milk a year worth \$850 million at the farm gate, equating to more than 20 per cent of Australia's total milk. More than 6600 local people are employed on dairy farms and in eight major dairy processing factories.

"The Northern Victorian Dairy industry makes up over 85 per cent of dairy production in the Southern Basin system. The Commonwealth and Murray Darling Basin Authority must adapt the plan to give the industry confidence to grow and create jobs," UDV President Paul Mumford said.

"The Northern Victorian Dairy industry is worse off as a result of the Murray Darling Basin Plan having lost close to one billion litres of milk production since the Basin Plan's inception- this needs to change, we need real adaption if the Commonwealth want to create jobs", said Mr Mumford.

"We know jobs have declined as a result of the Basin Plan and the dairy industry has been hit the hardest, if the Prime Minister wants the nation focussed on creating jobs then we need to get real and adapt the Basin Plan".

"The current legislation allows for adaption to the plan that acknowledges new information, it's crazy to think that we don't know anything new from when the legislation was first passed in 2007", said Mr Mumford.

This Friday will see the State and Federal Water Ministers meet for the first time in 2020. The UDV is calling an urgent discussion on the vital Basin Plan adaption.

"Let's acknowledge the socio-economic impacts the plan is having, let's look at the science that tells us the Lower Lakes cannot remain fresh, let's look at the information that tells us we just can't physically get all this water to the Murray River's mouth without impacting others. It's time to be honest and make a change," Mr Mumford said.

"We have a new Federal Water Minister who says he is listening and has a set of 'fresh new eyes' to review the Basin Plan."

The UDV is urging Federal Water Minister Keith Pitt to acknowledge the problems with the Basin Plan and adapt. It is only through Basin Plan adaption that dairy farmers can confidently create the jobs our nation requires to recover post COVID-19.

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