

Wednesday 25 September 2019

Farmer groups cheesed off about GI protections

Farmers are being urged to fight back against the European Union's demands for Australia to restrict the use of common cheese names in a proposed free trade agreement between Australia and the 28 EU countries.

Peak dairy farmer groups the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV) and Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), supported by the industry's services body Dairy Australia, will lead a series of events across Victoria aimed at giving farmers the information they need to tell the Federal Government how a ban on common cheese names will impact their businesses.

UDV President Paul Mumford said the events, which will be hosted by the farmer group, would include a presentation from the Department of Agriculture on the concept of geographical indications (GIs), Dairy Australia on how GIs will impact the dairy industry, and ADF on how the industry is responding to the EU's GI threat, as well as a Q&A session featuring all three organisations.

"We're really cheesed off that the EU is demanding we stop using common product names, such as feta, parmesan, and mozzarella. So we're urging farmers, manufacturers and even consumers to stay informed and learn how they can help us convince the Federal Government that GIs will be another kick in the guts for the dairy industry," Mr Mumford said

The dairy industry estimates that the EU's demand for GI protections will impact Australia dairy products with an aggregate sales value of more than \$650 million.

Cheese manufacturers could end up paying a staggering \$70-90 million per year in the early stages of the planned trade deal to rebrand and repackage products, as well as engage in consumer re-education.

ADF President Terry Richardson said the industry remained anxious that dairy would be a major loser out of any trade deal between Australia and the EU.

"This agreement must have benefits for both sides, considering the ease of access European dairy manufacturers have to the Australian market," Mr Richardson said.

"An opportunity exists to remove trade barriers that are currently stifling dairy trade between Australia and the EU, but this deal should free up the trade relationship rather than creates technical barriers such as GIs," Mr Richardson said.

The events will be held across the state at:

- **Warrnambool** | Warrnambool Bowls Club, Monday September 30, 7:30pm
- **Cobden** | Cobden Football Club, Tuesday October 1, 11:00am
- **Tangambalanga** | Tangambalanga Community Hall, Monday October 7, 7:30pm
- **Kyabram** | Ky Club, Tuesday October 8, 11:00am
- **Tinamba** | Tinamba Community Hall, Monday October 21, 11:00am
- **Leongatha** | Leongatha RSL, Monday October 21, 7:30pm

ENDS

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.