

Media Release



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

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Water buybacks to further damage Northern Victorian dairy industry

The Victorian Farmers Federation's United Dairy Farmers of Victoria (VFF UDV) says Northern Victoria's dairy industry would be further damaged by water buybacks and the recovery of the 450GL up-water target ahead of this week's meeting of State and Federal Water Ministers to discuss the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF UDV President Mark Billing said the group strongly opposed the recovery of the 450GL saying it would lead to losses in dairy production and local jobs.

"Canberra cannot continue to ignore the value of the dairy industry in Northern Victoria, given it is such a critical and major employer in the region."

"The VFF UDV do not support the recovery of the 450GL as the evidence clearly shows that further water recovery will cost food production and jobs."

Mr Billing cited analysis released by the Victorian Government last week that shows a large proportion of lost dairy production in Northern Victoria is attributed to the Basin Plan.

"The analysis clearly identifies the decline in milk production over the last 17 years totalling over 1,000 million litres, with 420 million litres of this reduction attributable to the negative impacts of the Basin Plan."

"That loss of milk production caused by the Basin Plan is costing rural jobs and rural people. We need to see some common sense and care as we enter the final stages of the Basin Plan negotiations," Mr Billing said.

Mr Billing said dairy is the major industry in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, with almost 900 dairy farms producing over 1,200 million litres of milk worth \$850 million at the farm gate, a third of the total milk produced in Victoria, and more than 20 per cent of Australia's milk. More than 6,600 local people are employed on dairy farms, with 10 major dairy processing factories operating across the region.

"The Albanese Government must understand that the Basin Plan has caused long term economic losses and employment losses, and any further water recovery, will be a substantial cost to the budget, contract the economy, and continue to see jobs go, in regional communities."

"The Commonwealth must deliver on the Plan's original commitments and guarantee no negative economic impacts on our farming communities. A responsible government would be working to protect and grow the contribution of agriculture to the economy," Mr Billing concluded.

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