



8 August 2024

The Hon. Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture
Victorian Government
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
via email: ros.spence@parliament.vic.gov.au

Cc: Mr Peter Tuohey, Rural Assistance Commissioner (via email)
Mr Grant Poulter, Chief of Staff, Minister for Agriculture (via email)

Dear Minister,

Re: Urgent Support for West Victorian Severe Drought Conditions

We write to you as representatives from the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF), in conjunction with the United Workers Union (UWU) representing Dairy processing workers, to bring to your attention the urgent situation faced by dairy farmers in South-West Victoria due to prolonged drought conditions.

For the past 12 months, South-West Victoria has experienced a severe deficiency in rainfall, as classified by the Bureau of Meteorology. In some areas rainfall deficiencies have been classified by the bureau as the 'lowest on record'!

Drought conditions have drastically impacted dairy farmers' ability to sustain their livestock and maintain operations. The conditions have led to extremely low soil moisture and a significant scarcity of pasture and feed growth.

The lack of moisture has rendered hay and silage production unfeasible, exacerbating the feed shortage. Lucerne hay prices have surged to more than \$400 per tonne, and silage costs have similarly escalated, placing an immense financial burden on our farmers.

Compounding this issue is the lack of feed substitute crops such as vetch and canola which are subject to the same drought conditions. The Wimmera region, a crucial source of feed for our dairy farmers, is particularly hard-hit, leaving many without viable alternatives to sustain their herds.

Given these extraordinary challenges, ADIC and the UWU requests your immediate assistance and intervention. We need urgent support from State Government to ensure our dairy farmers can access necessary resources to continue their operations and prevent further deterioration.

We would also like to invite you to visit West Victoria to see firsthand the conditions our farmers and industry is enduring.

This visit can be done in coordination with the Rural Assistance Commissioner, Mr. Peter Tuohey, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current challenges and to discuss potential actions.

Your presence and support would significantly boost the morale of our farmers and provide a platform for discussing immediate and long-term measures to mitigate the impact of drought.

The exact date of the visit can be confirmed based on your availability.

We look forward to your prompt response and we are hopeful that together, we can address this crisis effectively.

Should you have any questions, or to arrange a meeting, please phone ADF CEO Stephen Sheridan on 0408 664 841 or by return email.


Yours sincerely,



Ben Bennett
Chair – Australian Dairy Industry Council
President – Australian Dairy Farmers



John Williams
Deputy Chair – Australian Dairy Industry Council
Chair – Australian Dairy Products Federation



Mr Neil Smith
National Dairy Coordinator
United Workers Union