

# STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PLAN



The Australian dairy industry is vital to the Australian economy. It plays a major role in the agriculture sector as well as rural and regional communities. Australian dairy products rank fourth in global trade and have one of the highest per capita consumptions in the developed world.

### The role of Dairy Australia

Dairy Australia (DA) delivers services to benefit dairy farmers and protect the right to farm. This includes research and innovation, supporting farm business management, responding to events such as drought, bushfires, floods or COVID-19, developing tools to adapt to the environment and address climate, supporting on-farm employment needs, marketing of dairy products and commitment to sustainability, policy research, industry insights, and delivering international market programs.

We work closely with dairy farmers and other important industry stakeholders including the Australian Government and Research Organisations to advance the interests and sustainability of the dairy industry and maximise the value of the dairy levy.

### Our commitment to consultation

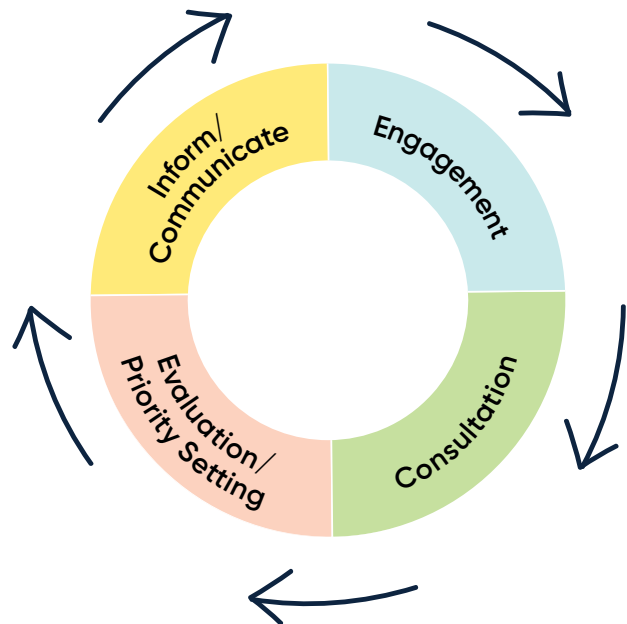
DA is committed to having open, accountable and responsive decision-making, informed by effective communication and consultation between DA, dairy farmers, the Australian Government and industry stakeholders. DA has incorporated the recommendations within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s Best Practice Guide to Stakeholder Consultation (available on the DA website here: [dairyaustralia.com.au/about/strategy-and-performance/performance-report](http://dairyaustralia.com.au/about/strategy-and-performance/performance-report)) into the DA Stakeholder Consultation Plan.

Effective consultation and engagement to inform DA’s investments and services are critical to ensuring that services and investments are well directed and align with stakeholder expectations. We are committed to regular evaluation and review of the ways that we consult stakeholders to ensure that they are effective and provide optimal benefit to dairy farmers and the industry. This includes ensuring our consultation processes and tools are consistent with the following principles:

- Transparency
- Accessibility
- Straightforward communications
- Well planned
- Fit for purpose
- Responsive

### Our approach to consultation

The DA approach to Stakeholder Consultation has four primary steps as outlined within the chart below.



DA worked closely with farmers, Group B Members and other important stakeholders to understand their needs and direct investment priorities for the dairy industry. The DA Strategic Plan 2020–2025 was developed with widespread industry consultation and outlines the priorities and outcomes DA aims to deliver over the five-year term. These priorities are set by the dairy industry and DA will work closely with stakeholders to deliver these outcomes.

To support the delivery of the Strategic Plan each year DA develops its Annual Operating Plan (AOP) based on the expected income for that year. The AOP will outline the priorities for investment in research, development and extension (RD&E) and Marketing activities.

The DA Strategic Plan 2020–2025 and Annual Operating Plan is published on the DA website.

In developing the Annual Operating Plan DA consults with a wide group of stakeholders including Dairy Moving Forward, Regional Services, Business Group, feedback received from dairy farmers, the Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF). This sets the DA investment priorities and objectives for the operating year.

## Evaluation framework

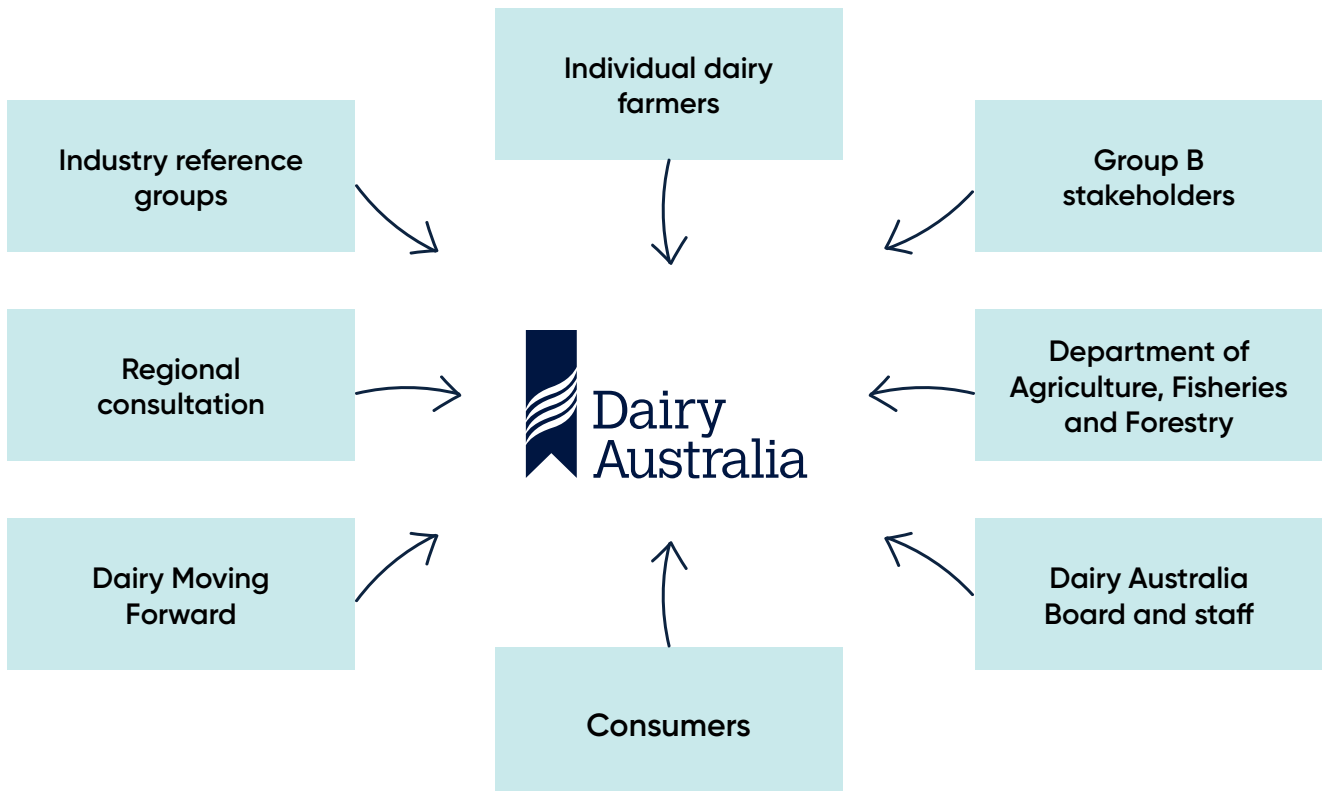
DA's Evaluation Framework guides how we monitor the performance of investments. In 2020/21, the framework was revised to align with the 2020–2025 strategy, which reprioritises investments over the five years for better service to the dairy industry. This updated framework strengthens monitoring and evaluation outcomes, enhancing the following aspects:

- Alignment with our new portfolio structure to allow better strategic focus.
- Metrics that cascade to be able to monitor from each strategic priority down to individual projects.
- Metrics that matter, with a greater focus on outcomes and lesser focus on activities.
- Further transparency, including quarterly publication of our performance summary.

The Evaluation Framework is available on the DA website here: [dairyaustralia.com.au/about/strategy-and-performance/performance-report](https://dairyaustralia.com.au/about/strategy-and-performance/performance-report).

## Channels and mechanisms for stakeholder consultation and engagement

In keeping with our commitment to being open and transparent about how input and ideas from dairy farmers and industry is incorporated into strategy design, operational planning and priority setting (including the reasons for their inclusion or otherwise), DA consults with dairy farmers and industry via a number of channels and mechanisms which are outlined below:



## Dairy Moving Forward

A National Primary Industries RD&E framework is in place to identify industry priorities and facilitate greater coordination among the Commonwealth, state governments, CSIRO, Research and Development Corporations (RDCs), industry and university sectors to better coordinate their roles in RD&E related to primary industries. Dairy Moving Forward is the dairy component of the National RD&E framework with the objective of developing, overseeing and guiding the coordination and alignment of research, development and extension in the dairy industry and to ensure the outcomes of investments in RD&E address the industry agreed priorities. Further information on the National Primary Industries RD&E framework can be found at [agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/innovation/national-primary-industries](http://agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/innovation/national-primary-industries).

Dairy Moving Forward brings together RD&E providers and investors along with other industry stakeholders to set out a blueprint for RD&E investment. The Steering

Committee that governs the Framework is supported by 10 'communities of interest' and each have their own technical domain focus. Members of the communities represent organisations who contribute to the dairy industry across the RD&E spectrum, including dairy farmer representation.

The Steering Committee of Dairy Moving Forward has accountability back to the Australian Government's Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (Research and Innovation Committee). Dairy Moving Forward identifies and prioritises pre-farmgate interest areas through six program areas. Each program area is also supported by at least one "Community of Interest" drawing on a range of stakeholders with expertise across research, development and extension. DA's investment decisions are guided by the priorities of Dairy Moving Forward and there is consultation with the committee during the development of the AOP.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
Relevant DA Project Investments related to on-farm RD&E are able to demonstrate how Dairy Moving Forward input has been taken into account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Well planned</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> </ul>
DA will make available on the DA website an annual summary of all RD&E priorities identified by DMF and the rationale behind these investment theme recommendations. This will be updated in alignment with the DMF consultation and decision timelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Straightforward communications</li> </ul>

## Regional level consultation and engagement

DA works together with Regional Development Program (RDP) Boards across Australia's eight dairy regions to ensure regional consultation and engagement. The RDP Boards have predominately farmer representation and are well networked and connected across the regions to ensure a broad reach, diversity and engagement. The Boards play a significant role in priority setting and levy investment across the dairy regions and inform the work of DA.

DA's Regional Services team provides regional focus and connected effective relationships within our dairy communities to advance the dairy industry in a pre-competitive manner through the following objectives:

- To deliver services that result in adoption and practice change on farm
- To contribute technical expertise within regions, across regions and nationally
- To provide a one-stop shop – being the local and regional point of contact, referral and/or coordination
- To inform RD&E and policy priorities and development

DA's Regional Services Team services the eight RDP Boards.

Regional investment priority setting occurs through the consultation between Regional Services and local dairy communities including farmers and service industries. It is recognised that there is a diversity of dairy farmers and the way in which each is engaged must be tailored to their specific needs with the assistance of a customer relationship management database that tracks the history of connection.

RDP Boards are involved in the development of priorities and AOPs. DA's Regional Services team is the conduit to collect priority setting information from RDP Boards and regional networks for AOPs both nationally and regionally. There are feedback loops via the Regional Services Team to the RDP Boards through the priority setting, AOP and evaluation processes.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
DA works closely with RDP Directors (dairy farmers) and regional networks to ensure greater alignment and provide opportunity for stakeholder input into priority setting. This process is undertaken through various workshops and meetings. Outcomes are then shared with the regions and dairy farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Responsive</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Straightforward</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> <li>• Well planned</li> </ul>
DA's Regional Services Team works in dairy regions and communities to maintain and build relationships and regional networks providing dairy farmers the ongoing opportunity to share feedback at the local level. DA's customer relationship management system and database is a key mechanism utilised for ongoing relationship management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Responsive</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> </ul>
DA will make efforts to engage with State Dairy Farming Organisations include formal consultation (both directly and via the RDPs) at least twice a year to gain their insights on regional and state issues and priorities. Where incorporation of these priorities is not possible, we will endeavour to provide that feedback in a timely respectful and courteous manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Well planned</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> <li>• Responsive</li> </ul>

## Direct dairy farmer consultation and engagement

DA undertakes a wide range of stakeholder communication and engagement initiatives through the course of the year using the regional consultation processes and infrastructure (as mentioned above). This provides dairy farmers the opportunity to have a strong voice in decision making, engage with the DA staff and be exposed to levy-funded programs. DA's Regional Services provide opportunities such as seminars, on-farm workshops, discussion groups, focus farms, demonstration sites, field days and priority-setting sessions. Feedback is regularly gathered from industry events for input, evaluation and review purposes.

In addition, DA conducts surveys across portfolios (Animal Husbandry; Land, Water and Carbon; Feedbase and Animal Nutrition; Farm Business Management; Dairy Workforce; Learning and Capability) to gather insights and inform program design.

Availability and access to the DA leadership is critical for accountability. DA's Managing Director, senior staff and Directors frequently travel to dairy regions visiting farm businesses, attend industry events, engaging with the dairy service industry regionally and providing numerous opportunities for dairy farmers to ask direct questions or raise issues.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
The DA Managing Director and/or Chair visit each of the eight dairy regions making themselves available to dairy farmers in the region to discuss DA performance and investments. Wherever appropriate, they will be joined by DA Directors and members of the DA staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Responsive</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>
DA continually aims to provide dairy farmers with access to mechanisms to provide feedback and input into DA. One of the key mechanism for this is through the Regional Services team based locally in the regions along with digital (e.g.: email contact addresses), written (e.g.: feedback forms), phone or through face-to-face engagement. DA aims to respond to the feedback in a timely and respectful manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Responsive</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>
DA is committed to delivering regular written information to all dairy farmers (and their representative organisations) about DA investments, activities and performance. This information will be provided through electronic direct mail (EDM), social media, Dairy Australia website, direct mail where appropriate. Each of these will provide contact details enabling readers to provide feedback. In addition, DA is committed to utilising the rural media including articles in Australian Dairy Farmer Magazine wherever possible to inform dairy farmers about DA activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Straightforward communications</li> </ul>
DA is committed to undertaking an annual survey to gather dairy farmer insights and monitor their perceptions of farmer satisfaction with their levy investment. This includes gathering feedback on the way in which DA engages with dairy farmers. Feedback from the survey is included in the Annual Performance Report which is published on the DA website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Well planned</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> <li>• Straightforward communications</li> </ul>

## Group B member consultations and engagement

DA's Group B members are Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF). During strategy planning and annual planning processes DA actively collaborates and consults with both our Group B members.

While we collaborate throughout the planning process, the starting point is during the environmental scan to ensure we understand key industry issues. As the plans reach draft stage, there are formal feedback sessions in which we align on key priorities and capture feedback.

DA is committed to establishing and maintaining a positive and cooperative working relationship with all representative organisations. This includes consulting with State Dairy Farmer Organisations (SDFOs) which form part of the ADF structure to understand their key priorities, issues and direction. This information is used in understanding the current state of the industry and provide another important input into DA investment decisions and priority setting.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
DA is committed to undertaking formal Annual Operating Plan (AOP) Consultation during the first half of each calendar year with DA's national registered organisations (i.e. ADF and ADPF) as part of priority setting. Once final investment decisions are made a summary of how key inputs have been addressed within the AOP (or reasons why they have not been adopted) is communicated back to the Groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility</li><li>• Responsive</li><li>• Transparency</li><li>• Straightforward communications</li><li>• Fit for purpose</li></ul>

## Industry policy groups consultation and engagement

ADF Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs) form a critical role in the DA stakeholder consultation process. There are three PAGs under the ADF structure that make recommendations to the ADF National Council on dairy farmer policy and advocacy. Where required, ADF may also establish taskforces on specific issues to provide advice to the relevant PAG.

We provide a wealth of technical policy and RD&E advisory into each of the PAGs and relevant taskforce processes, enabling strong consultation between DA and ADF on areas including:

- Economics and Trade PAG
- People and Communities PAG
- Farm Operations PAG

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
DA is committed to ensuring that the ADF Policy Advisory Groups and relevant taskforces are well supported with appropriate information and data so that participants are well informed and able to provide input into organisational priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility</li><li>• Well planned</li><li>• Fit for purpose</li><li>• Responsive</li></ul>

## Industry reference groups engagement and consultation

All of industry Reference Groups in the areas of Human Health and Nutrition, Dairy Industry Sustainability, and Trade have also been established to gather input and consult on areas affecting the whole dairy industry supply chain. These committees comprise representatives from DA, ADPF, ADF and staff from milk processing companies to consult on industry priorities and industry positions.

On the Sustainability agenda, engagement and consultation also includes stakeholders outside of the dairy industry to ensure the Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework remains robust and relevant. The stakeholders we consult on this agenda include dairy farmers, dairy manufacturers, customers, retailers, buyers, suppliers, government representatives, non-government groups, special interest groups and others. Additional information is published on the DA website.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
DA is committed to ensuring that all industry reference groups are well supported with appropriate information and data so that participants remain well informed and able to provide input into priority setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility</li><li>• Well planned</li><li>• Fit for purpose</li><li>• Responsive</li></ul>

## Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

As one of Australia's fifteen Rural Research and Development Corporations, Australian Government and dairy primary producers are committed to co-investing in research and development (R&D) that delivers benefits to industry and dairy communities.

Typically, the Australian Government matches dairy industry expenditure on eligible R&D (up to 0.5% of the determined industry gross value of production).

As a result, the Australian Government is a key stakeholder of DA who is consulted with in relation to operations and investments.

DA is committed to and accountable to the Australian Government's Best Practice Guide to Stakeholder Consultation Guidelines.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
DA is committed to undertaking formal AOP Consultation during the first half of each calendar year with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This will include providing a summary of how key inputs have been addressed within the AOP (or reasons why they have not been adopted).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Well planned</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> <li>• Responsive</li> </ul>
DA is committed to ensuring that all scheduled meetings with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to discuss DA performance are well supported with appropriate information and data so that the Australian Government is well informed and able to provide input into organisational activities and priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Well planned</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> <li>• Responsive</li> </ul>

## Consumers

Dairy plays an important role in the diets of consumers both domestically and overseas and these dairy consumers have a keen interest in the dairy industry and how it operates. While DA gains insights from many consumer interest groups via the Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework consultation mechanisms, we also undertake significant consumer research and surveys to gain direct consumer insights that form a vital input into our programs.

In particular, these insights are crucial for development of DA's marketing, health and nutrition, trade, market information and insights, policy development and sustainability programs. Indirectly, these insights flow through to the way DA shapes our on-farm programs, particularly those related to practices addressing social license issues.

DA consultation commitments	Guideline principles
DA is committed to undertake consumer research and surveys to gain direct consumer insights that form a vital input into our programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well planned</li> <li>• Fit for purpose</li> </ul>
DA will continue to ensure that dairy consumers have an ability to attain information about DA, the Australian dairy industry and the products it produces. The <a href="http://dairy.com.au">dairy.com.au</a> website and the You Ask We Answer (YAWA) platform found on this website is a good example of DA being transparent, accessible and responsive to consumer interest around dairy products, the way it's produced and the way we farm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Straightforward communications</li> <li>• Responsive</li> </ul>

## How we inform and communicate

DA has adopted numerous channels in which it communicates with dairy farmers and other industry stakeholders. We understand that not all stakeholders are the same and we aim to tailor our approach based on the situation, stakeholder type and purpose to obtain the most beneficial outcome.

- During the annual planning process DA will engage and consult with dairy farmers and other stakeholders. Based on the Stakeholder group this will be through face to face and/or virtual workshops, organised meetings and phone conferences. Following consultation, evaluation and priority setting feedback is provided directly to the stakeholder group.
- Final investment areas are shared with all stakeholders via the Annual Operating Plan which is also published on the DA website. As mentioned above this sets the activities and investments for that year.
- DA also utilises the rural media (including Australian Dairy Farmer magazine) wherever possible to inform dairy farmers about DA activities.
- DA actively communicates via major social media channels.
- Where we have received direct feedback, we will aim to respond to that feedback in a timely and responsible manner directly with that stakeholder.

- Where information cannot be shared due to privacy or confidentiality the stakeholder will be advised of this.
- DA also communicates through frequent electronic direct mail, including regular e-newsletters.
- DA has also listed various technologies and IP on GrowAG which is readily accessible.

The following information about DA investments and operations is also available on the DA website:

- Information on investment initiatives undertaken by DA such as Dairy Bio, DairyFeedbase, DataGene, Smarter Irrigation for Profit, C4 Milk collaboration, Fractures Trial, marketing and promotion, Learning and Capability development, Climate and Sustainability and Trade Programs.
- DA's Annual Performance Report and Annual Report.
- Relevant news articles.
- Videos and webinars on a range of relevant topics.
- An events calendar setting out the date, topic and location of key events for stakeholders that wish to participate.

DA monitors our engagement, consultation and communication methods and look to continuously improve to ensure the most beneficial investment is made to support dairy farmers and achieve short and long term sustainability for the dairy industry.

## Australian Dairy Industry Structure







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#### Disclaimer

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#### Acknowledgement

Dairy Australia acknowledges the contribution made to Stakeholder Consultation Play by the Commonwealth government through its provision of matching payments under Dairy Australia's Statutory Funding Agreement.

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