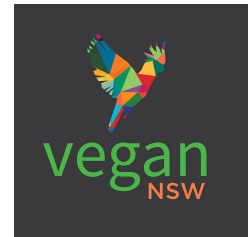


**INQUIRY INTO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE
DAIRY INDUSTRY IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Vegan NSW
Date Received: 1 October 2020



SUBMISSION

Inquiry into the long-term sustainability of the dairy industry in New South Wales

Portfolio Committee 4: Industry NSW Legislative Council 2020

1st October 2020

INTRODUCTION

Vegan NSW wishes to thank the Chair and Members of *Portfolio Committee No. 4 Industry* for calling this Inquiry and the opportunity to contribute to this important issue.

Vegan NSW

Vegan NSW Ltd is a NFP charity and registered association, and is the only community group focussed solely on representing the NSW vegan community. Each month we engage with and provide services to well over 10,000 people in NSW.

Vegan NSW brings a perspective to the public discourse that promotes the well-being of animals, while remaining committed to social justice for all - both humans and other animals.

What does vegan mean?

Although being vegan is often thought of as a diet, in reality it encompasses a wide ranging commitment to avoiding harm to animals. Vegans avoid the use of animals for:

- food,

- clothing,
- product testing, and
- animal-harming entertainment.

Benefits to animals, our environment and human health

Being vegan reduces the unnecessary suffering and early death that many animals experience due to their interaction with the human species. The Vegan Society Uk definition of veganism is as follows:

“Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.”¹

Being vegan helps prevent harmful climate change by avoiding animal agriculture, which has high water use, greenhouse emissions and leads to greater deforestation.²

A balanced vegan diet is healthy at all stages of the human life cycle (ref: Australian Dietary Guidelines).³ Contrary to previous popular belief, the consumption of milk intended to meet the nutritional needs of an infant of another species is not a requirement for the health of the human species at any stage of our life cycle.⁴

SUBMISSION

This submission relates to parts (b) and (d) of the ***Terms of Reference***.

¹ The Vegan Society. 2020. Definition of veganism | The Vegan Society. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism>. [Accessed 30 September 2020].

² Beyond Zero Emissions. 2020. Agriculture, Farming and Land Use - Beyond Zero Emissions. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://bze.org.au/research/agriculture-farming-land-use/>. [Accessed 30 September 2020].

³ Cox, Owen (2013). The Guidelines | Eat For Health. [online] Eatforhealth.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>.

⁴ The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2016, *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, Volume 116, Number 12, pp 1970-1980

(b) the Impact of external influences on the dairy industry, including but not limited to drought, water, energy and price-setting

1. External influence: Calls to action regarding climate change

Given the recent rise in the population's interest and concern regarding harmful climate change, there is likely to be increasing calls to action from business, citizens, other nations and international bodies to industry and government regarding managing current and limiting further climate change.⁵

The dairy industry is highly exposed to this threat, given its significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, land degradation and deforestation, and its comparatively high water use in a country prone to increasing drought. There has been research on the environmental impacts of dairy, particularly in terms of water usage/drought/climate change etc. This report doesn't address Australia specifically, but is an interesting international perspective on the global impact.⁶

Industries that rely on animal agriculture, such as dairy, are increasingly being boycotted by those who choose more environmentally sustainable foods,⁷ and industry players are actively developing alternatives.⁸

2. External influence: Calls to action regarding animal well-being

The Australian community is becoming increasingly aware of what they consider unacceptable animal 'welfare' standards of the dairy industry. These include disposal of male calves as waste, removal of calves from

⁵ Schiermeier, Q. (2019). Eat less meat: UN climate change report calls for change to human diet. *Nature*.

⁶ MILKING THE PLANET HOW BIG DAIRY IS HEATING UP THE PLANET AND HOLLOWING RURAL COMMUNITIES. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-06/apo-nid306314.pdf> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

⁷ VomadLife.com. (n.d.). *Why People Go Vegan: 2019 Global Survey Results*. [online] Available at: <https://vomadlife.com/blogs/news/why-people-go-vegan-2019-global-survey-results>.

⁸ Food Frontier. (n.d.). *What's at Stake?* [online] Available at: <https://www.foodfrontier.org/whats-at-stake/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

mothers, long trips to slaughter, branding without pain relief and killing of cows early in their natural life cycle when no longer sufficiently profitable.^{9 10 11}

Increasing numbers of people are committing to avoiding unnecessary harm to animals, and eschewing all forms of dairy (cow, sheep, goat).¹²

It is increasingly difficult for farmers to keep animals fed and watered during conditions of drought and bushfires. This is an animal welfare issue as well as a financial issue for farmers.¹³

3. External influence: Calls to action re protection of the natural environment

There has long been interest in the preservation of the natural environment from citizens in NSW. This has only increased following the recent calamitous 2019-2020 bushfire season and the impact observed on natural habitat and species.^{14 15}

⁹ Animal Justice Party NSW. (n.d.). *The Deadly Dairy Industry*. [online] Available at: <https://nsw.animaljusticeparty.org/the-deadly-dairy-industry/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

¹⁰ Animals Australia (2018). *"Bobby" is one of hundreds of thousands of week-old calves discarded yearly as "waste products" of t.* [online] Animalsaustralia.org. Available at: <https://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/dairy.php>.

¹¹ Voiceless. (n.d.). *Dairy Cows*. [online] Available at: <https://voiceless.org.au/hot-topics/dairy-cows/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

¹² VomadLife.com. (n.d.). *Why People Go Vegan: 2019 Global Survey Results*. [online] Available at: <https://vomadlife.com/blogs/news/why-people-go-vegan-2019-global-survey-results>.

¹³ 7NEWS.com.au. (2020). *"It's absolutely devastating": More than 13,000 farm animals killed in NSW bushfires*. [online] Available at: <https://7news.com.au/news/bushfires/more-than-13000-livestock-dead-in-nsw-c-644648> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

¹⁴ May 2019, 23 (n.d.). *Animal agriculture causes biodiversity loss: UN report*. [online] Vegan Australia. Available at: https://www.veganaustralia.org.au/animal_agriculture_causes_biodiversity_loss_un_report.

¹⁵ Sep 2020, 2 (n.d.). *Animal agriculture is key driver of ecosystem decline, government told*. [online] Vegan Australia. Available at: https://www.veganaustralia.org.au/animal_agriculture_is_key_driver_of_ecosystem_decline_government_told [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

Calls to action from citizens and a range of environment protection groups for increased habitat and species protection is likely to increase.

¹⁶

The dairy industry is exposed to this ongoing and increasing pressure as it contributes to land degradation, loss of biodiversity, loss of habitat, and destruction of ecologically important areas, such as wetlands and forests via grazing and fertiliser and pesticide runoff into waterways ^{17 18}

¹⁹

4. External influence: Updated health information - dairy not essential for human health

Research has not substantiated claims that dairy is essential for human health. Australian and international health authorities have updated their guidelines noting that other sources of nutrients are able to meet our nutritional requirements.²⁰

This is already impacting consumer behaviour²¹, and hence is a threat to the sustainability of the dairy industry.

5. External Influence: Increasing popularity of plant milks

¹⁶ Sep 2017, 7 (n.d.). *Millions of native animals killed to clear land for animal farming*. [online] Vegan Australia. Available at: https://www.veganaustralia.org.au/millions_of_native_animals_killed_to_clear_land_for_animal_farming [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

¹⁷ www.dairy.edu.au. (n.d.). *Caring for the environment on a farm*. [online] Available at: <https://www.dairy.edu.au/resources/video-resource/caring-for-the-environment-on-a-farm-chapter-9> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

¹⁸ www.dairy.edu.au. (n.d.). *Dairy farm facts | Discover Dairy*. [online] Available at: <https://www.dairy.edu.au/resources/information-resource/dairy-farm-facts>.

¹⁹ www.dairy.edu.au. (n.d.). *Inquiry Unit - Sustainable dairy farming | Discover Dairy*. [online] Available at: <https://www.dairy.edu.au/resources/pdf-resource/farm-to-plate--inquiry-unit-sustainable-dairy-farming-year-5-and-6> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

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²¹ The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2016, *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, Volume 116, Number 12, pp 1970-1980

Not too long ago coconut milk was the most well known plant or non-dairy milk in Australia. Now supermarket shelves are full of plant based milks, including soy, almond, oat and rice milks, to name a few.²²

²³

As this trend continues, spurred on by concerns about the treatment of animals, the global environment, preserving the natural environment, and human health, the dairy industry, in all its forms, will experience further loss of market share, impacting its ongoing sustainability.

(d) the role of government in addressing key economic challenges to the industry

The NSW Government should move urgently to assist farmers dependent on the dairy industry to transition into other forms of agriculture that are less exposed to the risk posed by changes in consumer sentiment and behaviour, due to their justified concerns regarding the animal well-being, climate change, and degradation of the natural environment.

The government has the opportunity to proactively address the impacts of this change, which are already being felt by the industry.

Actions the government should consider include:

When allocating water from the Murray/Darling system, water should be allocated to farmers who are producing products with the most effective water usage, such as low water use crops. Currently, a very

²² Bungard, M. (2019). *Australians go nuts for non-dairy "milks."* [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/business/consumer-affairs/australians-go-nuts-for-non-dairy-milks-20190814-p52gzz.html>.

²³ Dairy News Australia. (2019). *The rise of dairy alternative drinks in Australian supermarkets.* [online] Available at: <https://www.dairynewsaustralia.com.au/markets/2019/04/19/540507/the-rise-of-dairy-alternative-drinks-in-australian-supermarkets>.

high priority is given to providing water to animals, including those used by the dairy industry. If farmers were not engaged in dairy farming, there would be more water available for the communities and those engaging in more sustainable industries. “Essential needs have first priority in allocations.”²⁴ Whilst this is a federal issue, the NSW government should play its part in promoting responsible water use in NSW.

Rather than investigate ways of propping up industries that in the long-term are unsustainable, the NSW government should fund research into the transition from dairy and other forms of animal agriculture to plant based equivalents and to other alternatives such as carbon farming. We note that Vegan Australia is leading the way in this research.²⁵

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Oct 2020

²⁴ www.nswfarmers.org.au. (n.d.). *The truth about the Murray-Darling*. [online] Available at: http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/NSWFA/Posts/The_Farmer/Environment/The_truth_about_the_Murray_Darling.aspx [Accessed 30 Sep. 2020].

²⁵ Vegan Australia. (2014). *Impact of a vegan agricultural system on land use*. [online] Available at: https://www.veganaustralia.org.au/impact_of_a_vegan_agricultural_system_on_land_use.