Quality workplaces:
Dairy Farmer Guide

For tips, tools and practical examples of how you can implement good people management practices on your farm visit DairyNZ.co.nz/WAP

Andrew Hoggard  
Dairy Industry Group Chairman, Federated Farmers

Employment practices on dairy farms are critical to a successful industry. This action plan comes from the desire of both DairyNZ and Federated Farmers to front foot this issue and show the public that our industry wants to be recognised as a quality employer. To do this we will develop and provide resources, tools and guidance along with leadership to enable farmers to work towards incremental change in their businesses which will attract and retain employees. This will enable everyone to enjoy success in the dairy industry.

The key measure of success is our action plan, which we believe is a key step in our industry’s evolution to improve practice. At the industry level there are aspirations and a ambition and we will develop plans and solutions for farms.

John Luxton,  
Chairman, DairyNZ

If we are to remain competitive as dairy farmers in a global marketplace, we need work environments that use technologies and business practices that motivate and reward people. Responsible dairy employers engender a pride in our industry that enhances our reputation and increases the chances of attracting and retaining talented people. High quality work environments are vitally important to employers and employees.

New Zealand dairy farmers also have a fundamental duty to their employees and themselves to provide working conditions that are safe and healthy. As farmers in dairy farming have changed, so must our practices. The next profitable and sustainable dairy farms have good management practices that make it easy to attract and keep a skilled professional workforce. The two go hand in hand.

This new Sustainable Dairying – Workplace Action Plan is a step in the right direction. It’s about improving the quality of work environments for our people in the dairy farming industry. It’s about moving from merely meeting minimum standards to setting higher aspirations and working towards excellence.

There are great things about working in the dairy industry. And there are some things we need to improve.

The people working in our farming businesses are vital to our future success as an industry – and our dairy farms need to be enjoyable, safe and rewarding places for them to work.

Great work environments will help attract and keep the motivated and talented people we need in our industry. We can’t fully respond to the new challenges and opportunities ahead, without them.

DairyNZ and Federated Farmers have developed the Sustainable Dairying – Workplace Action Plan together. They consulted widely with other groups and organisations and their feedback has shaped the final version.
WHAT IS THE WORKPLACE ACTION PLAN?
Developed jointly by Federated Farmers and DairyNZ the plan sets out guidelines, expectations and aspirational targets under the five pillars of good people management practice.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO? HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED?
You are invited to sign up as a Friend of the Workplace Action Plan at dairynz.co.nz/WAP. As a Friend of the Workplace Action Plan you can receive your support in several ways.

At your level you can simply sign up on-line to signal to others that you agree with the five pillars of good employment practice. You will help the industry make a public statement about its aspirations for our workforce. It will also communicate to the market place what you believe and aspire for in your farming business. Businesses can also target specific areas they want to work on to improve practices in the workplace. Each business will have unique areas it wants to focus on so the setting of specific goals is an important first step. Once goals are established it is easy to access the comprehensive set of on-line resources and mix these to meet your needs.

The most effective way to ensure the five pillars of good practice are operating in your business is to use the GoodPeopleManagementActionTool. This on-line approach gives a voice to every member of the farm team. Management is therefore fully informed about the opportunities and challenges to improve employment practices. For most businesses the GoodPeopleManagementAssessment Tool is a natural start to planning for any changes in the workplace.

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT’S WORKING?
We’re making a number of changes and reporting on progress as time goes on. The plan will be formally reviewed within three years.

FIVE Pillars OF GOOD PEOPLE Management
A quality workforce builds on the strength of the firm foundations created by complying with the law. If we want to attract, develop, reward and retain highly skilled and motivated people, we need more than just compliance. The five pillars of good people management on farm are a comprehensive list but if we get these things right on our New Zealand dairy farms, we will have a good supply of people who want to work on our dairy farms. From there we can select those with the skills, experience and attitudes we need to drive our industry forward and make working on farm an enjoyable day-to-day experience for all.

1. BALANCED AND PRODUCTIVE WORK TIME
Having people with the right skills to ensure work is accomplished is a fundamental principle. A quality workplace has a range of options for work schedules that give workers appropriate flexibility to fit work in with the demands of work, home and family while ensuring overall productivity.

Employees working on a well-structured roster normally:
- have at least two days off a week
- have at least two days off in one week
- have regular days off set by the roster
- have regular days off set by contract,
- have regular days off on a rotating system within the employment agreement.
- Sufficient flexibility to support an overall work/life balance.

- Often have more than half their month off
- are not likely to work more than 50 hours a week
- are unlikely to work more than 10 hours a day
- are unlikely to work more than 30 hours a week in any five week break.
- Are supported for continuous improvement.
- Farm teams have:
- concentration and focus
- accountability and responsibility
- a day off every week
- Monday as a day off
- flexibility to support the overall work/life balance.

2. FAIR REMUNERATION
Quality work environments must legislatively respect minimum standards and attract and retain people to work on dairy farms. For tips, tools and practical examples of how you can implement good people management practices on your farm visit dairynz.co.nz/wap.

Employees are responsive to ensuring their employees are working in a safe and healthy environment and use a fair and equal wage and good work practices in the workplace. Employees feel empowered to play a role in the farm’s safety record and in the wider values and role of the farm so we can ensure our farm practices are competitive.

- Are rewarded for continuous improvement through ongoing skill development
- Are responsive for personal growth and career development.
- Are supported and valued, whatever career path they choose in dairy.

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3. WELLNESS, WELLBEING, HEALTH AND SAFETY ON FARM WORKERS:
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4. EFFECTIVE TEAM CULTURE
A successful career on dairy farms means our employees:
- Have career direction and career planning.
- Accommodation complete with legal requirements and in a good condition.
- Physical condition at work, such as temperature, light, or noise, are managed to appropriate personal protective equipment.
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