



Plan to Farm:

A Pre-Election Policy Statement by the South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association (SADA)

Securing the Future of South Australian Dairy

The South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association (SADA) calls on all political parties contesting the upcoming state election to formally commit to the principles and priorities which underpin—*Plan to Farm*.

This policy is grounded in the South Australian Dairy Industry Action Plan 2024–2029 and seeks to ensure that the dairy sector remains a vibrant, sustainable, and productive contributor to the state's economy, environment, and communities.

The policy is aimed at reinforcing the importance of the dairy industry in South Australia and placing it front and centre in the policy generation and management framework.

SADA urges the Government of South Australia to instruct all relevant departments, agencies, and policy vehicles to be cognisant of applying their frameworks with the dairy sector's growth ambitions.

Particular attention must be paid to reforming *planning laws, water management, environmental regulation, and primary industry legislation* to remove barriers and unlock opportunities for dairy farmers to keep farming and producing nutritious foods for South Australians and global consumers.



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Why Dairy Matters

South Australia's dairy industry is a cornerstone of regional vitality, food security, and economic resilience. With nearly 200 dairy farms producing premium milk and dairy products, the sector contributes \$1 billion annually to the state economy and supports thousands of jobs across farming, processing, logistics, and retail.

The *SA Dairy Industry Action Plan 2024–2029* sets a bold vision for a premium, sustainable, and globally competitive dairy sector. *Plan to Farm* builds on this vision by articulating the policy commitments needed from government to ensure the sector's continued success.

1. Strategic Alignment with the Dairy Industry Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies five key pillars:

- Sustainability and Climate Resilience
- Market Growth and Premium Branding
- Workforce Development
- Technology and Innovation
- Regulatory Reform and Industry Partnerships

Plan to Farm focuses on the fifth pillar—regulatory reform—by calling for coordinated government action across planning, water, environmental, and primary industry laws.

A. Planning Laws: Enabling and Protecting Agricultural Development

Current planning frameworks often treat agricultural infrastructure as peripheral or incompatible with regional development goals. SADA calls for:

- Integrated regional planning that embeds dairy as a strategic land use in local development plans.
- Agricultural zoning protections to prevent urban encroachment and fragmentation of productive land.
- Streamlined approvals for dairy infrastructure including effluent ponds, feed pads, and rotary dairies.

B. Water Laws: Securing Access and Efficiency

Water is the lifeblood of dairy farming. SADA urges reform to:

- Align water policy with climate adaptation goals, ensuring resilience in dry years and flood events.
- Guarantee long-term water security for dairy producers through transparent and responsive licensing and allocation systems.
- Support reinjection and recycling technologies, including metering frameworks that reward efficiency.

C. Environmental Laws: Supporting Sustainable Practice

Dairy farmers are stewards of the land. Environmental regulation must:

- Recognise and reward best practice in methane recovery, nutrient management, and biodiversity conservation.
- Enable innovation in effluent treatment, pasture management, and carbon sequestration.
- Avoid duplicative compliance burdens by harmonising local, state and federal obligations.
- Biodiversity



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2. Whole-of-Government Commitment

SADA calls on the Government of South Australia to:

- Issue a directive to all relevant departments— Planning, Environment, Water, Primary Industries, Treasury—to align their policies with the Dairy Industry Action Plan.
- Establish a cross-agency Dairy Growth Taskforce to monitor implementation and resolve regulatory bottlenecks.
- Fund pilot programs and infrastructure upgrades that demonstrate the benefits of policy alignment.

3. Primary Sector Laws: Modernising Agricultural Governance

The legislative framework governing agriculture must evolve to reflect modern realities. SADA recommends:

- Updating primary industry legislation to reflect the role of dairy in food security and export growth.
- Embedding dairy in biosecurity and animal welfare strategies, with clear roles for industry-led assurance schemes.
- Supporting cooperative models and value-chain integration, including recognition of branded provenance programs (like SADA Fresh).

Let Dairy Keep Farming

South Australia's dairy farmers are ready to lead. With the right policy settings, they will continue to produce world-class dairy, care for the land, and contribute to a sustainable future. *Plan to Farm* is not just a policy—it is a promise to every South Australian that dairy will keep farming, keep producing, and keep delivering.

4. Economic and Social Impact

The dairy sector's growth benefits all South Australians:

- Regional jobs and investment in towns like Mount Gambier, Fleurieu Peninsula, and Barossa.
- Premium products for domestic and export markets, reinforcing SA's global reputation.
- Environmental stewardship through regenerative farming and emissions reduction.

5. A Call to Political Parties

SADA invites all political parties to:

- Endorse the Plan to Farm policy as part of their election platform.
- Meet with SADA leadership to discuss implementation pathways.
- Publicly commit to supporting the dairy sector through legislative and budgetary measures.



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Pre-Election Policy Statement

Prioritising Agriculture in Land and Urban Planning

The dairy industry is committed to both environmental sustainability and economic viability to ensure we can farm well now and into the future. As we as an industry plan for the future, we ask government to *Plan to Farm* by giving dairy and agriculture priority in all land planning decisions.

As urban sprawl continues to encroach on rural farming areas, we call for governments to adopt land and urban planning rules that prioritise farming activities and safeguard agricultural land. We ask that all planning laws and decisions - including land zoning, buffer zones, and new developments – are made to minimise the impacts of urban expansion on agriculture and actively support the long-term viability of agricultural production in rural and regional areas.

Finally, we also urge that governments ensure new residents to rural areas understand and accept the realities of rural life, including the typical seasonal and ongoing agricultural activities which are essential to the local economy and community of the region.

Sustainable Water Source

South Australia's water laws must evolve beyond the current policy approach, which often prioritises environmental outcomes ahead of agricultural needs. Future planning should ensure water security for farming, with allocations reflecting on-farm realities while integrating sustainability and climate goals within a balanced, growth-oriented framework. Embedding these principles in future reforms will strengthen regional economies, protect food production, support local communities, and safeguard South Australia's dairy industry for generations to come, while maintaining responsible stewardship of shared water resources.

EPA Issues and Effluent Management

SADA will work with the EPA to develop effluent management guidelines tailored to South Australian farming conditions, ensuring they support both practicality and compliance. We aim to encourage adoption of best-practice systems such as anaerobic digesters and nutrient recycling by offering financial support and incentives. To reduce regulatory burden, the approval process for effluent infrastructure upgrades will be streamlined, including the introduction of self-certification for accredited effluent system designers, bypassing the need for EPA approval. Together with the EPA, we will also develop a comprehensive farm planning toolkit featuring effluent management templates and compliance checklists. In addition, SADA will back on-farm environmental audits and reward farms that meet or exceed EPA standards with additional incentives. Support on-farm environmental audits with incentives for farms that meet or exceed EPA standards.

South Australian Dairy Industry

ACTION PLAN

2024 - 2029

Focus and Objectives

1. Grow South Australian production to 700 million litres to meet growing demand.
2. The continued development of the South Australian product as a premium product.
3. Increased reach into Asian nations to develop markets for South Australian Dairy.
4. The development of a world class traceability system using distributed ledgers/blockchain technology.
5. The creation of an industry centre of excellence.
6. A strong focus sustainability dovetailing on Australia's excellent reputation as the best clean green natural supplier of dairy products, while positioning SA as being recognised as the best of the best.
7. Demonstrating that South Australia has the highest animal welfare standards.
8. Working with the South Australian Government as it outlines its strategic direction for South Australia.
9. Development of career paths, training models and succession plans for the future of the industry.
10. Promoting the industry as an industry with prospects.