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MEDIA RELEASE

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Organic dairy applauds dairy processors on GMO position

Organic Dairy Farmers of Australia (ODFA) applaud the Australian Dairy Product Federation on its responsible approach in rejecting the proposed release of GMO (genetically modified organisms) rye grass and other pasture grasses into Australia, recently stated by Executive Director Dr Peter Stahle at the United Dairy Victoria conference (UDV).

'Stewart Price, CEO of ODFA, said that pasture grasses such as rye are particularly pernicious in their spread as a weed, being one of the most costly and difficult of weeds to control in crop farming.

This has direct implications for all organic dairy and conventional dairy producers because once released, they are highly likely to spread unchecked across Australian farmlands, lead to the decertification of Certified Organic Dairy land, and the wholesale corruption of conventional dairy products favoured by domestic and international consumers for being clean, green and GM free.

The Willer and Lernoud, FiBL-IFOAM survey 2014, reported that Australia has 12.0 million hectares of certified organic land, nearly a third of the world's 37.5 million hectares. Permanent grasslands, including rye grass based pastures, account for 63 per cent of this.

Consumers of certified organic food expect that organic products will be GMO free. This is reflected in Certified Organic Standards in Australia and the 164 countries world-wide which do not allow the inclusion of GMO products in food production.

Mr Price said that 'despite attracting little formal research funding, even relative to its size or value, the world market for Certified Organic products grew from US\$15.2 billion in 1999 to \$63 billion in 2012.'

According to McKinsey Australia's 2014 paper 'Compete to Prosper: Improving Australia's global competitiveness', the only industry in which Australia is decisively competitive on the basis of relative productivity and relative costs is agriculture. Moreover, the most prominent example of latent potential is in food manufacturing, which is advantaged by Australia's strong agricultural sector and reputation for food quality.

'The Australian Certified Organic Dairy and conventional dairy industries produce high value local and export products and this is particularly relevant because the introduction of GMO products would rob producers and consumers of choice, stifle market growth and provide an opportunity for non-tariff barriers against our products overseas, effectively giving our competitors a free ride,' Mr Price said.

For example, in 2014, NASAA (National Association for Australian Agriculture) secured Australia's first Australia-China organic trade access agreement expected to boost Australia's organic and biodynamic industry by up to \$100 million per year. This would not have been possible without the high level of integrity of Australia's organic certification processes.

A key point in the ADIC (Australian Dairy Industry Council) and Dairy Australia's joint submission to the Issues Paper to inform development of a National Food Plan notes that bio-security plays a critical role in protecting the food supply, providing community as well as individual benefits.

'Any actions in this area need to consider all potential impacts, including human health impacts, socioeconomic costs from trade losses, and environmental damage. This includes achieving a biosecurity and quarantine system viewed by all as meeting the letter and spirit of World Trade Organisation agreements, and not as a trade barrier.'

Mr Price said, 'To continue to realise the economic benefits of Australian Certified Organic Dairy and certified organic agriculture adherence to these principles is vital. This includes the responsible release of new technologies



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and products supported by substantiated evidence of their safety and efficacy. GM pastures are not supported by such evidence and the ADPF have rightly recognised this.

'Inherent in this are proper controls and management, reliable product segregation and labelling to ensure a minimal impact on the viability of high value, high growth areas of agriculture production and food manufacturing.'

END

[About Organic Dairy Farmers Australia \(ODFA\)](#)

The ODFA advocates for the ethical and fair approach to high quality dairy food production. All products sold under the ODFA label are produced following adherence to Certified Organic and/or Biodynamic Standards.

Representing Certified Organic Dairy farmers and manufacturers, ODFA is committed to the co-operative farming model, sharing ideas, resources and ultimately, the benefits the ODFA generates.

In the interest of our members, the Certified Organic sector and society as a whole, the ODFA works to build awareness and understanding of where food comes from and how it is produced; and how a farmer's relationship with their land is much more important than the size of the operation; and that farmers who own and live on the land are best placed to care for the land, and ultimately, produce better food.

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