Dairy Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Dairy leadership and board

Job title	Dairy Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Department	Dairy leadership and board
Reports to	Board (in a co-operative, the Board elected by farmer members)
Direct reports	Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Commercial Director, HR Director and other members of the executive team
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Leads the whole dairy business and delivers the strategy agreed with the Board, whether the business is a company or a farmer-owned co-operative. Balances a secure, competitive milk supply with profitable growth, safe operations, food safety and long-term investment. Acts as the main link between the Board, the executive team, farmer suppliers or members, customers and other stakeholders.

Key responsibilities

Strategy and Board relations

- Develop the business strategy and long-term plan with the executive team and present it to the Board for approval
- Deliver the strategy and annual plan agreed by the Board, and report progress openly and on time
- Give the Board the timely, accurate information it needs to make decisions and oversee performance
- Work with the Chair to plan Board agendas and prepare major decisions
- Act within the authority the Board delegates and meet the duties of a director where appointed to the Board
- Recommend capital allocation, acquisitions, partnerships and disposals for Board decision

Milk supply and farmer relations

- Secure a reliable milk supply of the right volume, quality and seasonality to match plant capacity and demand
- Oversee milk pricing and supply terms so they are fair, transparent and sustainable for the business and its farmers
- Build trust with farmer suppliers or members through regular, open communication on performance and milk price
- Uphold the co-operative's rules and principles and support member democracy where the business is a co-operative
- Support farmers to improve milk quality, animal welfare and on-farm sustainability

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Commercial performance and growth

- Set the direction for the product portfolio, balancing butter, powders and cheese with higher-value products
- Lead relationships with major retail, food-service, ingredients and export customers
- Steer the business through commodity price cycles and protect margins and cash
- Identify growth through new markets, products, partnerships and acquisitions

Operations, safety and food safety

- Lead a culture where the health and safety of employees, contractors and visitors comes first
- Ensure food safety and quality systems protect consumers, customers and the reputation of the business
- Oversee plant capacity, utilisation and the capital investment programme
- Lead the response to serious incidents, product recalls and other crises

Sustainability, compliance and stakeholders

- Set and deliver targets for emissions, water use, waste and animal welfare across the supply chain
- Ensure the business complies with company and co-operative law, competition law and food safety regulation
- Represent the business with regulators, industry bodies, communities and the media
- Report sustainability performance to the Board, members, customers and lenders

Leadership and culture

- Build, lead and develop a capable executive team
- Set objectives for executives and recommend their pay to the remuneration committee
- Shape a culture of safety, integrity, accountability and continuous improvement
- Plan succession for senior roles with the nomination committee

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Proven record as a chief executive, managing director or divisional leader of a substantial business
- Senior leadership experience in dairy, food manufacturing, agribusiness or a related consumer goods sector
- Track record of delivering strategy, growth and better financial performance
- Experience of working with and reporting to a Board
- Strong understanding of commodity markets and how they affect margins and milk prices
- Experience of leading large, multi-site workforces with a strong safety culture

Desirable

- Experience of leading a farmer-owned co-operative or working closely with farmer members
- Degree in business, agriculture, food science, engineering or a related field, or an MBA
- Experience of international trade and export markets
- Experience of mergers, acquisitions or major capital projects

Skills and attributes

- Strategic thinking and sound judgement
- Clear communication with Boards, farmers, employees and customers
- Financial and commercial acumen
- Building trust and handling difficult relationships

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- Decision making in volatile markets
- Leading change
- Integrity and resilience

Measures of success

- Profit, cash flow and return on capital against plan
- Competitiveness of the milk price paid to farmers against the market
- Milk supply volume, quality and supplier or member retention
- Lost-time injuries and serious safety incidents
- Food safety outcomes, customer complaints and audit results
- Progress against emissions, water and animal welfare targets

Working conditions and safety

Based at head office with regular travel to sites, farms, customers and international markets. Attends Board meetings, member meetings and industry events, some of them outside normal working hours.

- Lead by example on health, safety, food safety and animal welfare
- Uphold the code of conduct and all legal and compliance requirements
- Raise concerns and report incidents promptly

This job description outlines the main duties of the role. It is not a complete list, and the employer may update it as the business changes, in consultation with the jobholder.

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