Dairy General Counsel

Finance, legal and corporate

Job title	Dairy General Counsel
Department	Finance, legal and corporate
Reports to	Chief Executive, with direct access to the Chair and Board
Direct reports	Legal counsel, company secretary, paralegals and compliance staff
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Heads the legal function of a dairy processor, co-operative or farming group and acts as principal legal adviser to the Chief Executive, executive team and Board. Protects the business across commercial and milk supply contracts, competition law, disputes, governance and regulation, and helps it grow lawfully.

Key responsibilities

Legal strategy and leadership

- Set legal strategy and priorities in line with the business plan
- Advise the Chief Executive, executive team and Board on major legal risks and decisions
- Manage the legal budget and external law firms, balancing cost and quality
- Lead legal work on acquisitions, disposals, joint ventures and major investments

Commercial and milk supply contracts

- Set contract standards, templates and approval limits across the business
- Oversee major contracts with retail, food-service, export and ingredient customers
- Oversee milk supply contracts with farmers and members, including pricing, notice and exclusivity terms
- Make sure milk supply terms comply with co-operative rules and any applicable codes of practice
- Lead negotiation of the most significant or high-risk contracts

Competition law and regulation

- Run the competition law compliance programme, including training and unannounced inspection procedures
- Advise on pricing, information sharing, collaboration and market position
- Manage merger control filings for transactions
- Advise on food law, labelling, environmental, trade and sanctions requirements
- Lead the legal response to recalls, regulatory investigations and enforcement action

Disputes and litigation

- Manage disputes with customers, suppliers, farmers, contractors and regulators
- Set strategy for litigation and arbitration and instruct external counsel

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- Resolve disputes early through negotiation or mediation where possible
- Report material claims and provisions to the Board and audit committee

Governance and compliance

- Advise the Board on directors' duties, conflicts of interest and decision-making
- Oversee company secretarial work, co-operative rules and member governance
- Own policies on anti-bribery, whistleblowing, data protection and ethical conduct
- Work with risk and internal audit to manage legal and compliance risks

Team leadership

- Lead, develop and retain the legal and company secretarial team
- Build legal awareness across the business through training and clear guidance
- Set service standards so the business gets fast, practical advice

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Qualified lawyer admitted to practise in a relevant jurisdiction
- Substantial post-qualification experience, including senior in-house experience
- Broad commercial contracts expertise in manufacturing, food or consumer goods
- Strong knowledge of competition law as it applies to pricing and supply
- Experience of managing litigation, arbitration or regulatory investigations
- Experience of advising boards and senior executives on governance
- Experience of leading a legal team and managing external counsel

Desirable

- Experience in dairy, agriculture or a co-operative business
- Experience of food safety, labelling or environmental regulation
- Experience of mergers, acquisitions or joint ventures
- Experience of export, trade and sanctions law across several jurisdictions

Skills and attributes

- Sound legal and commercial judgement
- Board-level influence and communication
- Negotiation
- Risk assessment and prioritisation
- Integrity and independence of view
- Clear, practical drafting and advice
- Team leadership

Measures of success

- Material legal risks identified and reported to the Board
- Contract turnaround times and compliance with approval limits
- Outcome and cost of disputes against plan
- Legal spend against budget, including external counsel
- Number of regulatory and competition compliance incidents

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- Compliance training completed across the business

Working conditions and safety

Office-based, with regular travel to sites, customers and external advisers. Attends Board and committee meetings, with occasional out-of-hours work on urgent matters.

- 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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