Dairy Interim Manager

Dairy leadership and board

Job title	Dairy Interim Manager
Department	Dairy leadership and board
Reports to	Board or owner
Direct reports	The senior team of the role being covered, for example functional directors or heads of department
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Provides experienced senior leadership to a dairy processor, co-operative or farming group for a fixed-term assignment, typically 3 to 12 months, as interim Managing Director, Chief Executive, Finance Director or other senior executive. Covers a vacancy, stabilises a business in difficulty or delivers a defined project or turnaround, then hands a stronger organisation to the permanent appointee.

Key responsibilities

Diagnosis and assignment plan

- Agree the scope, deliverables, success measures and exit date of the assignment with the sponsor
- Assess the business in the first weeks through site visits, data reviews and interviews with staff, customers and suppliers
- Identify the most urgent risks to cash, food safety, milk supply and customer service
- Present a written 30/60/90-day plan to the Board or owner for approval
- Set clear priorities for the senior team and remove distractions from them

Stabilisation and performance

- Take control of cash flow, working capital and short-term forecasting where the business is under pressure
- Restore basic disciplines in safety, food safety, production planning and financial control
- Act quickly on loss-making products, sites or contracts, bringing options and recommendations to the Board
- Protect key retail, food-service and export customers through direct contact during periods of disruption
- Keep lenders, auditors and other key stakeholders informed and confident

Commercial and strategic delivery

- Review margins against milk price, commodity returns and customer contracts, and act on the findings
- Lead turnaround, restructuring, integration or capital projects within the agreed scope
- Prepare or refresh the business plan, budget and investment cases for the Board
- Assess plant capacity, product mix and milk intake to find quick gains and longer-term options
- Keep commitments on emissions, water and animal welfare on track during the assignment

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Milk supply, members and stakeholders

- Maintain the confidence of milk suppliers and, in co-operatives, of farmer members and their representatives
- Review milk supply agreements, milk price arrangements and collection costs for risks and opportunities
- Communicate openly with employees, staff representatives, customers and suppliers about changes
- Work within the co-operative's rules and member governance when proposing changes

Governance and impartial reporting

- Report impartially to the Board or owner on performance, risks and the true condition of the business
- Give candid recommendations on strategy, structure and people, without regard to personal interest
- Strengthen financial controls, delegated authorities and risk management where gaps are found
- Ensure compliance with company and co-operative law, competition law, food safety and health and safety requirements
- Report progress against agreed deliverables at regular reviews with the sponsor

Capability and handover

- Assess the senior team and recommend changes to structure, roles and people
- Coach managers and build the permanent team's capability so improvements last
- Support the recruitment and selection of the permanent appointee where asked
- Prepare a structured handover plan, documents and introductions for the permanent appointee
- Leave clear records of decisions, open risks and recommended next steps at the end of the assignment

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Substantial experience at managing director, chief executive, finance director or equivalent senior executive level
- Proven record of interim, turnaround or change assignments with measurable results
- Senior experience in dairy, food manufacturing or a closely related agri-food sector
- Sound understanding of milk supply, milk pricing and dairy commodity markets
- Strong financial management, including cash, budgeting and management reporting
- Experience of reporting to a board, owner or investors
- Availability to start at short notice for a fixed-term assignment

Desirable

- Professional accounting qualification, for finance director assignments
- Experience in a farmer-owned co-operative, including member relations
- Experience of restructuring, refinancing or business sale processes
- Experience of export markets and international dairy trade

Skills and attributes

- Rapid diagnosis and prioritisation
- Decisive leadership under pressure
- Financial and commercial judgement
- Building trust quickly with boards, staff, farmers and customers
- Clear, candid communication and reporting
- Coaching and developing senior managers

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- Change and stakeholder management
- Objectivity and resilience

Measures of success

- Agreed deliverables achieved on time and within the assignment term
- Cash position and working capital against plan
- Operating profit or margin against the agreed recovery plan
- Safety, food safety and audit outcomes during the assignment
- Retention of key customers, milk suppliers and senior staff
- Quality and timeliness of the handover to the permanent appointee

Working conditions and safety

Fixed-term assignment, typically 3 to 12 months, often engaged on a day rate and starting at short notice. Based on site for most of the working week, with regular travel or temporary accommodation near the business, and attendance at Board meetings.

- 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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