Interim Dairy Operations Manager

Dairy leadership and board

Job title	Interim Dairy Operations Manager
Department	Dairy leadership and board
Reports to	Operations Director or Managing Director, as sponsor of the assignment
Direct reports	Production, engineering, quality, warehouse and site support managers
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Takes temporary charge of a dairy processing site or operation for a fixed-term assignment, typically 3 to 12 months, to cover a vacancy, stabilise a site in difficulty or deliver an improvement project. Restores safe, reliable and cost-effective output, builds the capability of the site team and hands over to the permanent manager.

Key responsibilities

Site diagnosis and 30/60/90-day plan

- Agree the scope, deliverables and exit date of the assignment with the sponsor
- Walk the site on every shift in the first weeks to understand people, plant and working practices
- Analyse output, yield, downtime, waste, safety and cost data to find the main causes of poor performance
- Present a 30/60/90-day plan with priorities, owners and measures to the sponsor
- Deliver quick wins in safety, output or cost within the first month

Safety and food safety

- Bring safety performance under control through visible leadership, risk assessment and incident follow-up
- Check that critical control points, cleaning, allergen and hygiene controls are working and recorded
- Close overdue actions from audits, inspections and incident investigations
- Enforce safe systems of work for cleaning chemicals, pressure systems, confined spaces and work at height
- Work with the technical team to protect product release, traceability and customer specifications

Output, plant and milk handling

- Stabilise production plans around daily milk intake, seasonal peaks and customer orders
- Reduce unplanned downtime by tightening maintenance planning, spares and breakdown response
- Improve yields and cut milk solids losses, product waste and rework
- Agree contingency plans for milk intake when plant capacity or availability is constrained
- Introduce short daily performance meetings and visual measures in each area

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Cost and reporting

- Take control of the site budget, labour costs, overtime, energy, water and consumables
- Deliver cost savings without risk to safety, quality or service
- Report weekly to the sponsor on output, yield, cost, safety and progress against deliverables
- Give the sponsor and Board an impartial view of the site's condition, risks and investment needs
- Prepare capital requests for urgent plant repairs or improvements, with clear payback

People and capability

- Lead the site management team and set clear roles, standards and accountabilities
- Coach managers and supervisors in problem solving, shift handover and performance management
- Handle absence, discipline and employee relations fairly and in line with company policy
- Work constructively with unions or staff representatives where present
- Identify talent and gaps in the permanent team and recommend changes to structure

Handover

- Embed new routines, standards and reporting so improvements last after the assignment
- Brief and support the permanent manager through a structured handover period
- Document open risks, unfinished actions and recommended next steps at exit

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Substantial experience as a plant, operations or production manager in dairy or food processing
- Proven record of stabilising or improving underperforming manufacturing sites
- Sound knowledge of dairy processes such as liquid milk, cheese, butter, powders or fermented products
- Working knowledge of HACCP, food safety management systems and occupational health and safety requirements
- Experience of managing site budgets and labour costs
- Experience of leading managers, supervisors and multi-shift teams
- Availability to start at short notice for a fixed-term assignment

Desirable

- Degree or equivalent qualification in dairy technology, food science or engineering
- Lean, continuous improvement or Six Sigma training
- Recognised health and safety qualification
- Previous interim assignments in dairy or food manufacturing
- Experience of commissioning or capacity expansion projects

Skills and attributes

- Rapid site diagnosis and root cause analysis
- Visible, hands-on leadership
- Production planning and scheduling
- Cost control and performance reporting
- Coaching and building team capability
- Calm decision making under pressure
- Clear, honest communication with sponsors and shop-floor teams

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Measures of success

- Lost-time injuries and reportable incidents
- Output and attainment against production plan
- Yield, milk solids losses and waste against target
- Plant availability and unplanned downtime
- Site operating costs against budget
- Agreed assignment deliverables achieved on time

Working conditions and safety

Fixed-term interim assignment, typically 3 to 12 months, often on a day rate and starting at short notice. Site-based in a food production environment with PPE and hygiene rules, long and flexible hours during stabilisation, and travel or temporary accommodation near the site.

- 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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