

Dairy industry unites to provide a million litres of milk for Australians in need

11 November 2011, Melbourne - Foodbank, Australia's largest hunger relief organisation, in collaboration with the Australian dairy industry, will today launch a new program to supply one million litres of milk annually to Australians in need. This is the first time an entire industry has come together to support Foodbank in its efforts to eliminate hunger in Australia.

John Webster CEO of Foodbank Australia said: "In these highly competitive commercial times it is great to see such an iconic Australian industry set aside competition to rally together to support those struggling in our community."

The milk will provide 10,000 valuable serves of milk every day of the year - a collective savings of around \$2 million to welfare agencies around the country. Following a successful pilot in Victoria, the milk will now flow to hungry Australians in all states on a weekly basis.

Ric Benjamin, CEO of Foodbank Victoria, added: "Victoria has a proud tradition as a major supplier of milk to the nation. So while parts of the dairy community are themselves finding times tough, it is a testament to them that they are still able to think of others and their need for nutritious food items."

There is a common misconception that it is just the homeless who rely on charities for food. In reality, the rising cost of living in Australia has increased the pressure on other groups who are now also seeking support, including those living on their own, the elderly, single mothers and the working poor.

Ian Bedford, Chairperson of UnitingCare Wodonga, commented on how the program will assist Australia's welfare agencies: "Milk is an essential component for us to provide wholesome and balanced meals to people coming through our doors.

"If milk is not available through Foodbank, welfare agencies have to spend precious dollars buying it. In turn, this is money taken away from other critical services we need to deliver," adds Ian.

Speaking on behalf of the program partners, Barry Irvin, Executive Chairman of Bega Cheese/Tatura Milk Industries said: "The dairy industry is proud to partner with Foodbank to help support those less fortunate. From the outset, the dairy companies have been unanimous in their commitment to making healthy and nutritious milk available for all Australians."

Commenting on the initiative, Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, said: "Milk is one of the key staples much sought after by welfare agencies. It's fantastic to see Foodbank and the dairy industry working together to make sure that vulnerable Australians are getting this daily staple that many of us take for granted."

The milk initiative forms part of Foodbank's Collaborative Supply Program, which proactively sources a consistent and sustainable supply of key staples for distribution to the 2,500 welfare agencies that rely on Foodbank for food.

Through the program, Foodbank works with the food industry, government and corporate supporters to manufacture core foods such as pasta and pasta sauce, breakfast cereal and canned fruit and vegetables. Foodbank facilitates the production, processing, packaging and transport of these products, using ingredients and services which are either donated or provided at minimal cost.

John Webster explains: "While we receive substantial amounts of rescued food from our donors, there is still a significant gap in the amount of staples received and what is needed to feed those relying on food relief. The Collaborative Supply Program helps us to bridge this divide."

The partners in the Milk Collaborative Supply Program are Australia's leading dairy companies: Bega Cheese, Fonterra, Lion, Murray Goulburn, Parmalat, Tatura Milk Industries and Warrnambool Cheese and Butter who will collaboratively donate the one million litres of milk per year. Brickwood Holdings and Labelmakers Group are providing the packaging.

Other Program Partners are the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Gardiner Foundation who are funding additional costs such as transportation.

This month, the Australian dairy industry was presented with Foodbank's annual Leadership Award at the Australian Food & Grocery Council's Gala Dinner in recognition of the significance of this new project in helping to combat hunger in Australia.

For more details about Foodbank Australia, visit www.foodbank.com.au.

About Foodbank

Foodbank is the largest hunger relief organisation in Australia and the pantry of the community sector. In partnership with the food industry, the corporate sector, governments and volunteers, Foodbank assists the charities and community groups of Australia to tackle the hidden problem of hunger, one empty stomach at a time.

Foodbank is a non-denominational, non-profit, national organisation with distribution centres in all states, the Northern Territory and eight regional centres. Foodbank is endorsed by the Australian Food and Grocery Council as the food industry's charity partner.

In 2010/11 21 million kilograms of food was donated to create 28 million meals. This enabled Foodbank to assist 2,500 welfare agencies to provide 75,000 meals every day.



Foodbank acts as a conduit between the food and grocery industry's donations and the welfare sector's needs. Food companies deliver their donations to Foodbank warehouses and welfare agencies collect the donated food and distribute it to people in need.

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