

18th May 2017

Murphy Farms Ltd

9(2)(a)

RE: Submission for Proposed Changes to Government Immigration Policy

Murphy farms Ltd has been operating in the South Canterbury region for 17 years and consists of 6 Dairy and support farms. We employ 20 staff in which 7 of these staff members are Immigrants on Essential Skills Work Visa's. All the immigrant employees have worked at Murphy Farms Ltd for a minimum of 2 years, they are Dairy Farm Assistants whom are capable of all milking processes and procedures, they understand the importance of milk quality and working in an industry that supplies a food source. They have developed skills that allow them to work with stock and the versatility to adapt to the ongoing changes in the Dairy industry. The proposed policy changes will not only affect the staffing capacity, but will have a negative impact on production with the flow on effecting the financial stability of the company and not to mention the extended community in the district. These immigrants not only work and pay taxes in our community but also add to the local economy by using goods and services and adding to the local school roll.

Salary Assessment:

Having a salary assessment in the immigration process will enable a clearer guideline for work visa applications but the threshold amount is too high. To enable us to increase our current employees to this salary whom we class as highly skilled we would need to restructure and down size our staffing levels, based on performance it would more than likely be an impact on our New Zealand resident employees. The assessment does not take into consideration the in-kind payments that are already being made to employees i.e. electricity, phone, internet, television all supplied by the farm but not included as part of the employee's salary. Also, the monetary amount spent on renewing visa applications as most of our immigrants are on yearly visa renewal the company aids with either half or the full amount of their visa renewals. As we are unable to pay this threshold to our highly skilled employees they would then fall into the intermediate skilled level which under your policy will exit the country after 3 years.


Maximum of 3 years in New Zealand before a mandatory 12 month stand down period:

The introduction of this policy will result in a mass exit in 3 years of employees on an essential skills work visa, this will create a hole not only in our company itself but in the dairy industry making it near impossible to fill the positions that we are currently struggling to fill with New Zealand Residents. We would have 4 staff members leaving the company not necessarily the same time but all within the same year resulting in additional strain on our current staffing levels. This also has an impact on our health and safety issues resulting in undue stress on all staff effecting their emotional and mental well-being. It has been common practise to consistently advertise and recruit dairy farm staff which is becoming more and more difficult to find applicants. As with any industry the continuous recruitment and training of employees creates an unstable environment for all staff and additional pressure on cashflow and budgeting.

Being on the coal face of recruitment for a dairy farm it becomes clear very quickly that the choice of working in the dairy industry is not as attractive for New Zealand citizens as other industries. Due to the nature of farming the staff need to be available at very alternate hours and required to live close by which is mostly obtained in a shared accommodation situation. As this is also an industry dealing with live animals it is crucial that we obtain staff whom have the correct temperament and empathy, as you can appreciate with the current negative media stories. These conditions make it very difficult to find suitable applicants which drives us to obtaining immigrants, I understand the current system gives the migrant workers a perception that they have a pathway to making a more permanent home in New Zealand which is not the case. This perception has been driven not just by the migrants themselves but also by the current policies that are in place and the inconsistencies in our current processing for a work visa application. The low skilled migrants are only a short-term measure to fill the gap until we find New Zealand resident employees, with this in mind I see the reasoning for having a stand down period to enforce this message but after 3 years I would no longer class this person as unskilled, while the milking process is perceived as a level entry position the experience and knowledge of an individual working in this environment for 3 years is no longer entry level.

We appreciate the challenges faced by the New Zealand Government with the ongoing issues of immigration increasing our population and the flow on effect to housing. We realise that there are industries that need a short-term option for skill shortages but the Dairy Industry is not one these, the recruitment of Dairy staff has been an ongoing issue and will now become even more difficult with the new policies being introduced. It would be better to concentrate on a more clear, concise and consistent way of processing work visa's and taking into consideration the industries that are lacking consistently rather than those that require a temporary measure.

s 9(2)(g)(i)

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the majority of the page's content below the first paragraph.

Murphy Farms Ltd