



News

Sale a chance to move forward

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It is time to move on.

That was the message from Murray Goulburn suppliers coming to terms with the co-operative's \$1.31billion sale to Canadian dairy giant Saputo.

As hundreds cast their votes in favour of selling the company, there continued to be a small band of suppliers that stood against the sale.

Gunbower dairy farmer Stephen Brown was among the defiant 2.1 per cent who voted against the sale and said given the fate of other Australian co-operatives it seemed almost inevitable it would end like this.

"We were giving away generations of work that has been built up by generations. The whole thing is a tragedy," he said.

"Deep down in their gut I think most farmers realise it's a bad thing.

"There was a lot of hoo-haa about selling to the Chinese but they were offering 35 to 40 cents a share more. The Australian Government doesn't have any issues selling to the Chinese, why should farmers be any different?"

The long and protracted sale has taken its toll on even the most loyal and positive of suppliers.

Mead dairy farmer Dianne Bowles was left disappointed and saddened by the state of affairs, and declared she was "done" with Murray Goulburn and Saputo.

"At this stage we're staying with Saputo but we'll be talking to every milk company that comes up our driveway. I'm going to be dollar driven, not loyalty driven," she said.

"I'm disappointed we got to this point and it makes me really sad. We shouldn't have got here.

"I'm done. It's been destroying."

Having been a vocal supporter of Murray Goulburn in the past, Ms Bowles said she was disappointed that the board was not more transparent in what other offers or options were on the table.

However, after months of uncertainty Ms Bowles accepted this was an opportunity to move forward.

"In some respects I'm glad it's over so we can all move on and get back to milking cows. The dairy industry is very fractured at the moment, and competitive. I hope we can get back to the new normal and somehow support each other and move on," she said.

The feeling that the sale of Murray Goulburn could be a healing moment for the industry is shared by many.

After years of resentment and anger, Gunbower dairy farmer Jason Hare is hoping Murray Goulburn's final chapter presents an opportunity to leave it all behind.

He, like so many of his peers, voted in favour of the sale and said ultimately it was never going to be a situation that could please everyone.

"There's no point in looking back," he said.

"Hopefully going forward it's all competitive and the milk price stays strong ... You can't dwell on it, you have to move forward and hopefully now the resentment will stop."

Murray Goulburn supplier Di Bowles from Mead

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