

THE STANDARD

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HD **DAIRY** farmers and Australian farmers in general
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DAIRY farmers and Australian farmers in general lack engagement at the value end of the food chain.

That's according to Gary Helou, who heads up Murray Goulburn, Australia's largest **dairy** foods **company**. Speaking this month at the Australian Farm Institute Roundtable dinner in Melbourne, Mr Helou said **dairy** farmers were active and engaged with farm-related matters, but not when it came to the supply chain.

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"I look at the incredible farmer activism and engagement about all matters that deal with the farm," he said. "They (farmers) have a high level of engagement in terms of economics and political matters, even free trade.

"Yet, when you get across to where the value is, which is the food their primary product they are completely bloody disengaged."

Mr Helou said he attended farmer meetings up four or five times a year, where he was "bombarded" by questions about matters relating to the farm.

"That is fair enough. That is my job.

"But I beg sometimes for a question about how we (MG) are doing with **cheese** in Japan or how is our nutritional plant going in **China** or what is our share of X, Y and Z in those growth markets?," he said. "And I'm brave enough to suggest that the same level of apathy exists in other sectors.

"Farmer 'passivism' and disengagement at the value end of the chain is bewildering."

Mr Helou said the day that farmers became engaged on the market end of the chain then agriculture sector would be in a healthier state.

"A farmer, or trader, needs to know on what side of the fence they want to sit," he said.

"If you hand over your product at the farm gate, you are basically at your weakest, you are getting your lowest price you are handing over all the value to someone else.

"It is only when you have an ownership **stake** and have an involvement, that you will create that wealth."

He said farmers needed to recognise their product was used to produce an agricultural good after it left the farm gate.

"People don't eat wheat, they don't eat live cows or raw **milk**," Mr Helou said.

Mr Helou said only a fraction of the value was at the farm gate.

"You are in a weak negotiating position. Left alone; a farmer ex-farm gate is in a very weak position."

CO mryglb : Murray Goulburn Co-operative Company Limited

IN i010010502 : Dairy Cattle Farming | i0 : Agriculture | i01001 : Farming | i0100105 : Cattle Farming |
ilsfarm : Livestock Farming | i41 : Food/Beverages/Tobacco | i413 : Dairy Products | icnp :
Consumer Goods | ifood : Food Products

RE austr : Australia | victor : Victoria (Australia) | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

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