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**CHINA**'S rapidly emerging middle class is creating unprecedented demand for **milk**, especially powdered formulas for infants.

Of course, we all know that. However, few fully comprehend how feverish and determined the **Chinese** are to secure their precious **milk** products.

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Until recently, **China**'s 1.3 **billion** people were not great consumers of **milk**, as **dairy** was not a traditional staple in their diet. The **Chinese** economic revolution in the past two decades has transformed the eating habits of a burgeoning middle class and demand for **milk** has surged.

However, six years ago tainted infant formula killed six **Chinese** babies and sickened 300,000 more. It sent shockwaves through **China**, but failed to stem demand. **Chinese** families began to **buy** large quantities of infant formula when they went overseas, bringing it back home in their luggage.

Others turned to the internet where they purchased formula through small online **Chinese** companies that guaranteed their products were bought from safe, overseas suppliers.

Many duck across to **Hong Kong** to **buy** foreign-made formula, leading to the imposition of a two-can limit on travellers. Other big retailers, like Boots and Sainsbury's in Britain, have also declared two-can limits on purchases of infant formula by individual customers in their stores.

This desperation and growing demand for **milk** products has sent some **dairy** producing nations such as Australia and New Zealand into raptures — and tiny Tasmania is at the head of the charge.

Tassie is leading the nation with record **milk** production and is on track for 10 per cent growth for this season with most coming from existing farms. Plans are in place to create another 50 **dairy** farms — from new properties and conversions from cropping acreage and tree plantations.

This is all great news for the state, however it pays to remember during this haste to make hay while the sun shines that it will be the reliable, ethical and safe suppliers who will win the long-term benefits from the **Chinese** demand.

Food safety scandals are common in **China**. In recent weeks **Chinese** authorities seized more than 30,000 tons of chicken feet contaminated by a cleaning agent and 17 people were in court on accusations of selling dog meat that had been poisoned with cyanide or overdoses of anaesthetics.

It is imperative that Tasmanian **dairy** farmers and their associated manufacturers work now to ensure the highest possible standards in production.

Reputation and **brand** is absolutely priceless in this context and if properly protected will stand the test of time. The last thing we want is for Tasmania to become beholden to commodity prices and fall prey to the inevitable boom and bust nature of such industry when other nations muscle in on supply. Tasmania's long-term future will rely on it becoming a trusted supplier of safe, healthy, premium

quality food. The time to build that priceless **brand** in the **Chinese** market is now, especially on the back of the enormous publicity created by the visit of **Chinese** President Xi Jinping.

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**RE** china : China | tasman : Tasmania | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | austr : Australia | bric : BRICS Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dvpcoz : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia

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