

THE STANDARD

SE news
HD **Chinese group** wants 50 **dairy** farms, two factories
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WC 541 words
PD 17 October 2014
SN The Warrnambool Standard
SC FWARST
LA English
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A **CHINESE** investment **group** has its sights set on at least 50 south-west farms as several of the region's leaders voiced concerns about the proposed mega **dairy** deal.

Investment **firm** Linear Capital announced its masterplan will involve the development of two new processing plants and the "acquisition" of dozens of **dairy** farms.

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Apart from a vaguely-worded statement, Linear declined to comment on the proposed plan yesterday, or whether it wanted to **buy** farms or come to some sort of lease arrangement.

The Standard understands several **dairy** farmers have already signed up to the **Chinese**-Linear deal as part of a lease deal, while other landholders have made in-principle agreements with the **group**.

Former United **Dairy**-farmers of Victoria (UDV) president Doug Chant said the reticent style of Linear Capital had left many in the south-west concerned.

"The approach of this **Chinese** investment **group** has been secretive, very secretive," Mr Chant said.

"As a patriotic Australian and **dairy** farmer, I cannot understand how anyone can support this model.

"I'm all for selling produce to **China** and reaping the benefits. But it is madness to sell our assets to the highest bidder and hope everything will be rosy. It won't."

Tasmania-based Linear Capital is acting for a **Chinese company** which it describes as having "established brands and long experience" in **China**.

Moyne Shire mayor James Purcell said the state government should impose a 50 per cent stamp duty on foreign investment in farmland.

The Vote 1 Local Jobs party founder said the cash raised would then be redirected into a first farm owners grant.

"Foreign investors understand that south-west Victoria is prime agricultural country yet no one in government does," Mr Purcell said. "We should be charging 50 per cent stamp duty on all foreign purchases of Victorian land, be it farming or residential.

"All funds raised would be redirected into assisting the next generation of south-west farmers. It's about smart foreign investment, not a free-for-all approach that we currently have."

Mr Chant said he understood the pressures many **dairy** farmers of retirement age felt, but a **Chinese** deal was a "poisonous option".

"It's been suggested that this is a way for **dairy** farmers to retire with dignity," he said.

"There's no dignity in this. I've got no problem with farmers from any country coming here and setting up a farm as an individual. This is different. This is a foreign government, not a foreign **company**, a foreign government that will control large slabs of the south-west."

Linear Capital has a particular focus on linking farms in the Camperdown, Cobden, Heytesbury, Simpson and Terang districts " traditionally considered prime **dairy** territory.

What remains unclear is the location of two **milk** processing plants proposed by Linear, or whether the **group** would **acquire** existing sites such as Murray Goulburn's Koroit factory or Warrnambool **Cheese** and **Butter** at Allansford.

Both the Victorian Farmers Federation and UDV president Tyran Jones have broadly supported of the Linear-**Chinese** proposal. But Mr Tuohey said the **Chinese company** should use domestic labour first.

IN i010010502 : Dairy Cattle Farming | i0 : Agriculture | i01001 : Farming | i0100105 : Cattle Farming
| ilsfarm : Livestock Farming

RE china : China | victor : Victoria (Australia) | 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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AN Document FWARST0020141018eaah00001