

SE News  
 HD **Milk** flow increases for co-op  
 BY ALEX ARNOLD  
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WHETHER it was a jump for joy or a leap of faith, Barnaby Joyce's use of a shovel as a pogo stick made for one of the more interesting sod-turning events seen at Berry in recent times.

Thankfully for the federal Agriculture Minister, the shovel landed in some fertile soil, perhaps symbolic of the mood surrounding the **dairy** industry after the recent signing of the **China**-Australia free trade agreement.

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The ceremony marked the official start on the Berry Rural Co-operative's \$2 **million milk** processing facility, which will produce **dairy** products for the co-op's South Coast **Dairy brand**.

The **brand** was born 10 years ago in uncertain times for the **dairy** industry and just as **Dairy** Farmers announced it would close its once thriving Bomaderry factory, costing the Shoalhaven 66 jobs.

At the time, the Berry farmers were still supplying the bulk of their **milk** to **Dairy** Farmers, but the co-op's 11 farmers decided to divert about 10 per cent of their output into their own South Coast **brand**, to be processed at Picton by **dairy** farmer John Fairley.

Today, the bulk of the co-op's 7 **million** litres of **milk** is **sold** to another co-operative, Murray Goulburn, but about 1.3 **million** litres goes into South Coast **Dairy**.

Co-op chairman Paul Timbs said having its own processing facility would allow the co-op to use even more of its own **milk** and expand on its current range, which is currently stocked in more than 150 locations from Wollongong to as far south as Merimbula.

Initial plans for the processing plant were drawn up four years ago, but the original design of the plant was substantially smaller than what was now being built, he said.

The plant will be able to process 18,000 litres of **milk** per day - four times South Coast **Dairy**'s current requirements.

"So there is the capacity for the plant to increase its operations," Mr Timbs said.

"We are already in discussions for contract processing and bottling with a number of interested parties.

"The opportunities for growth are endless."

The co-op hopes to have the facility running in June next year, creating seven new jobs and supporting others.

Mr Joyce said he was following the progress of the facility.

"People won't mind paying 30¢ to 40¢ a litre more for their **milk** if they know it is going back into supporting jobs and the farmers in their community," he said.

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