



HD Cadbury's second biggest Tasmanian **dairy** supplier struggles to attract a domestic buyer, but strong interest from **Chinese** investors

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LP The **sale** of **dairy** farms across northern Tasmania has plateaued in the last six years, despite the industry being touted as the state's 'white knight'.

Cadbury's second biggest supplier has struggled to sell his farm locally, but has had very strong interest from **Chinese** investors.

TD North west **dairy** farmer Ross Arnold, based in Montagu, says that he's struggled to find a domestic buyer and an international buyer is an option he's not ruling out.

"The locals are not going to be going any bigger, that's the way it's going to go I'm afraid, there's nothing else we can do about it," he said.

"(**Chinese** investment) could be a good thing for the people who want to sell their farms and get out if it, but I don't think it'll be good for the locals."

Mr Arnold's family has a long history in the township of Montagu.

He started milking 30 cows decades ago, and has since bought nine farms, milks 800 cows and produces five **million** litres of **milk** a year.

He's selling up to retire and doesn't want his children to take on the farm.

"I've seen what I've had to go through over the years and at this stage I don't want the boys to go through the same thing," said Mr Arnold.

"When the **milk** price is right things are alright, but when you're not getting enough for your **milk**, well it's just a battle to keep going.

"I've set the debt load up and it's my responsibility to get rid of the debt and retire."

As the average age of an Australian farmer increases, this is a common story not only in Tasmania, but nationwide.

Mr Arnold has had his farm on the market for over a year.

He says that he'd like to keep ownership in local hands, but he's had no luck so far.

Tasmanian **dairy** industry **group**, **Dairy** Tas, says 16 to 17 farms have **sold** each year since 2009.

While it's not a definitive figure, it's a sign that sales have plateaued.

Landmark Harcourts director John Hewitt, who's recently returned from marketing **dairy** properties in **China**, says he's struggled to find domestic investors in the local **dairy** industry.

"Historically we haven't been all that successful, although some of the ones that have invested in the last ten years are now becoming more successful and so hopefully we'll see more investment with Australian capital."

The real estate agent has packaged 12 **dairy** farms in Circular Head in Tasmania's north west to market to both domestic and overseas investors.

"We're not only pitching this to **Chinese** investors, we're talking to Australian super funds and agricultural investment companies," he said.

"But there's a lack of investment in agriculture in Tasmania. For us to expand our industry and improve employment and production we need outside investment."

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