

THE DOMINION POST

HD **SWEETER OFFER ON GOODMAN FIELDER BID**
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THE **board** of trans-Tasman **bread** and **milk company** Goodman Fielder has been asked to support a sweetened takeover offer.

Singaporean palm **oil** trader Wilmar International and **Hong Kong**-based bid partner First Pacific yesterday revealed a boost to their offer price from A65c to A70c a share.

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The offer came with strings attached. It required the Goodman **board** to allow due diligence and publicly advise shareholders to vote in favour of the deal by the deadline yesterday, which was due at 8pm Melbourne time.

Wilmar and First Pacific said they would not increase their offer, unless a competing proposal came along.

The A70c deal values Goodman Fielder's **equity** at A\$1.369 **billion** (\$1.480 **billion**).

First Pacific also revealed that two Goodman shareholders, Perpetual and Ellerston Capital, had agreed to sell a 9.8 per cent **stake** into the offer if Goodman's **board** approved it. Wilmar already owns 10.1 per cent of the food **company**, whose brands include Edmonds and Nature's Fresh.

Goodman Fielder asked for a halt on its share trading in Australia "pending an announcement . . . in relation to information received by the **company** in respect of a potential change of control transaction which is under consideration by the **company**".

Last month Goodman Fielder revealed it had received a non-binding conditional takeover proposal at A65c a share from Wilmar and First Pacific.

The **board** said then that the offer "materially undervalues Goodman Fielder and is opportunistic".

Since then there has been increasing speculation that Goodman Fielder would sell its New Zealand **dairy business** separately.

It has appointed investment bank Credit Suisse to advise on options for the Kiwi unit.

Wilmar and First Pacific have threatened to walk away if Goodman sells any of its businesses, but already some buyers have expressed interest.

Dairy group Parmalat has said the NZ **dairy business** is of strategic interest.

The **business** is a significant player in the New Zealand **dairy** market, delivering its **milk** and **cheese** brands such as Meadow Fresh, Puhoi Valley and Tararua to about 13,000 locations nationwide daily.

Latest results filed to the New Zealand Companies Office show it had annual revenue of \$490 **million** and earnings before interest and tax of \$43m.

Goodman Fielder shares last traded in Australia at A67.5c, or 73c on the NZX.

The trading halt is to be in place until an announcement is made to the market, or the start of trading on Monday.

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