

Article from:

Dairy processor joins call for help

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DAIRY manufacturer Longwarry Food Park has joined farmer calls for government assistance.

Managing director of the Gippsland processor, Rakesh Aggarwal, wrote to Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke earlier this month urging the Government to consider "whatever" form of short-term financial support and assistance for dairy farmers.

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"Milk prices at these levels are below the cost of producing milk for an average Gippsland farm and as a result many dairy farms will face severe financial hardship in the season ahead," the letter said.

"This is not sustainable and we are concerned that as a consequence many dairy farms in the Gippsland region will be forced to exit the industry."

Opening at 27c/lit, [Longwarry Food Park](#) commercial manager Des Reilly said the decision to write on behalf of the 75 suppliers was a show of unity.

"(We thought) it can't hurt, we know farmers were making representations and we wanted to demonstrate from the manufacturers side that we are in there as well," he said.

Suppliers applauded the move and hoped other factories would join the call.

One told *The Weekly Times* "it shows they are listening and are aware we can't do it for less than 30c a litre."

[Murray Goulburn](#) chairman Ian MacAulay said he supported any moves to assist farmers, adding that MG met with Mr Burke recently in Cobram and discussed issues facing northern Victorian suppliers.

However, there was no indication of "significant funding" to support the dairy industry.

[United Dairy Power](#) managing director Tony Esposito would also support anyone seeking aid for dairy farmers. Similarly, Fonterra spokesman James Molan said it supported industry and government efforts to develop "non-market distorting" farmer support programs.

[United Dairyfarmers of Victoria](#) president Chris Griffin, who recently warned farmers not to expect government aid, said the Longwarry Food Park letter "might be a different angle that would push some buttons for the Government."

A spokeswoman for Mr Burke said his office had not yet received Longwarry Food Park's letter, but that the Minister acknowledged it was a tough time for dairy farmers and manufacturers.

"Instead of receiving the boom in prices some expected a few years ago, many are now experiencing real hardship," he said.

"The Government has been assisting through existing programs."

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