

# Dairy farmers come out fighting in Rundle Mall

NIGEL AUSTIN



**QUALITY:** La Casa Del Formaggio marketing co-ordinator Irena Aleksoska and her boss Claude Cicchiello. Picture: MARK BRAKE

THE state's farmers are preparing to fight back against rock-bottom dairy prices through a campaign to raise consumer demand for the specialty products of South Australia's dairy manufacturers.

But the dairy industry has warned the campaign will be too late to save some farmers from being forced out of the industry including some good young next-generation producers.

South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association president and Mount Compass dairy farmer Nick Brokenshire said it was a tough time financially and emotionally for farmers as they struggle to survive the low prices.

He said he knew farmers who would be forced out of the industry by the depressed prices and urged consumers to help by buying South Australian made dairy products.

"We want to see the dairy industry continue in SA and it is vital that it survives and we allow customers to consume local products," he said.

While strong consumer demand for locally produced milk is helping slightly more than 10 per cent of the state's 250 dairy farmers maintain their higher milk prices, most farmers are being paid below the cost of production.

SA Dairyfarmers' Association chief executive Andrew Curtis said the campaign would start today with some of the state's best milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter and ice cream makers showcasing their food in Rundle Mall from noon to 1.30pm.

More than 30 high-profile dairy manufacturers have combined to promote the industry and to encourage SA consumers to buy more local dairy products.

The companies include Tweedvale, Cocolat, SADA Fresh, Robe Dairy, Gelato Bello, Fleurieu Milk Company, Jersey Fresh, Alexandrina Cheese Co, B.-d. Farm Paris Creek, Barossa Valley Cheese, La Casa Del Formaggio and Golden North.

Mr Brokenshire said local consumers had shown support for farmers by buying their milk and it was now time to expand that people power to include other dairy products.

"City shoppers and workers will be able to talk to farmers and produce makers, sample their award-winning products, and learn how their choices can help to support the local industry," he said.

A highlight of the Rundle Mall event is expected to be a mozzarella stretching demonstration by a cheese artisan from La Casa Del Formaggio, while sporting stars will be there to explain how dairy products have helped them to achieve success.

La Casa Del Formaggio chief executive Claude Cicchiello said it bought exclusively from seven farms on the Fleurieu Peninsula and was probably paying the highest price of any processor in the state.