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TFI joins forces with major meat processor

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TWO of Australia's biggest family-owned red meat processors have joined forces, with Thomas Foods International acquiring a 50 per cent stake in the Victorian-based Frew group for an undisclosed amount.

TFI is Australia's largest 100 per cent family-owned red meat processor, with plants in Tamworth, NSW, and Lobethal, along with the soon-to-be rebuilt Murray Bridge plant.

It also owns national domestic wholesale, foods service and export business Holco and exports across the globe with subsidiary companies in Asia, Europe and the US.

The Frew meat-processing company, now renamed Frew International, was established by the late Arch Frew in 1984 with son Robert managing the company since 1999. It owns and operates a meat-processing facility in Stawell, Victoria, with daily capacity to process more than 6000 lambs, sheep and goats.

The partnership provides TFI chief executive Darren Thomas and Robert Frew with an opportunity to further build on the platforms created by their fathers, Chris Thomas and Arch Frew. Under the arrangement, both companies will continue to operate independently, with Robert remaining as managing director of Frew International and Darren joining its board as executive chairman to help guide global growth.

Darren said the investment into Frew provided great benefits to both companies over the long term and, in particular, to Frew's longstanding livestock suppliers and customers.

"Both companies have had a mutual respect for each other over many years," he said.

"We are family-owned and family-grown, which means a lot in our industry, particularly to our customers and livestock suppliers. For us, it was important to partner with a company that has a similar focus on quality and running a business based on strong family values. This investment is not only aimed at helping facilitate Frew's exciting growth prospects but also to enhance TFI's offering across the meat industry, including some of Frew's existing key markets that TFI has not served in recent years."

Robert said he was excited with the partnership and could only see benefits to the company's customer relationships, commitment to service, quality, team and community under the new Frew International banner.

"Our well-established and focused national retail domestic customer relationships and export markets, in particular the Middle East, will benefit substantially through combining our increased procurement, supply chain, access to markets and processing volumes," he said.