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**"We can help support dairy farmers"  
says GV Food Co-op**

The **GV Food Co-operative** advisory board has committed its energy and resources to finding ways of supporting dairy farmers to stay on their land. **Heather Thorley** from the GVFC Board says: "as a teacher in Kyabram, I am horrified by the impact that this savage drop in milk prices will have on many of my students and their families. This disaster is a direct result of the supermarket milk wars, and we are about to pay big time for that stupidity".

"Responding to the crisis at both Fonterra and Murray Goulburn processors, the Co-op commits to support four concrete steps," **Graham Truran** secretary to the advisory board explained. "We will work with all levels of the government, community and industry to:

1. arrange alternative processing plants for local milk
2. establish a fund for procuring that milk at a fair, sustainable price
3. create a steering committee of financial, welfare and legal advisors to provide pro- bono support to small dairy farmers
4. organise a method to make sales directly to the public."

"We are well aware that farming and food processing industries across the country have cycles which are not well managed," says Chair of the GVFC **Les Cameron**. "We are also aware that world economics is bringing wild swings in commodity and market favourites. The truth is that investors are very often causing that disruption, and the small farmer is buffeted mercilessly. Farmers don't just lose money, they lose their livelihoods, their families and in too many cases their lives. This is a national scandal that must be arrested."

The Co-op has been working steadily on providing local products to new markets in a small but developing way. "We moved 7000 local products at real prices last year through our **REALfoodconnect** program" **Mr Truran** explained "and this year we hope to do twice that". "This has enabled some small companies to increase staff numbers and helped others survive. There is no reason why we can't find ways to help the dairy farmers as well," he concluded.

**Simon Fraser**, another farmer and board member recalls the loss of his family farm during a similar time with great despair and pain. "The first step is to talk. We invite any dairy farmer from the area who might wish some of our supports to ring one of us". **Simon** can be contacted on **0419 551 741** or farmers of their families can ring **Heather Thorley on 0409431766, or Graham Truran on 0419 561 451.**