

Bannister Downs eyes milk growth

■ **Jenne Brammer**

Gina Rinehart-backed dairy company Bannister Downs has unveiled plans to grow its milk production five-fold by 2022.

Hancock Agriculture chief executive David Larkin said the growth plans involved securing export markets for whole milk produced from grass-fed cows at the South West dairy.

Exact production figures remain confidential but growth at the dairy is expected to amount to more than 20 million litres a year.

Husband-and-wife team Mat and Sue Daubney took over the long-established family business east of Northcliffe in 1998 and joined forces with iron ore billionaire Mrs Rinehart in 2014.

Although the dairy is exporting a small amount of whole milk to Singapore, it has an eye on a much bigger slice of the Asian pie.

Conversations are under way in these markets but Bannister Downs won't step up efforts

until the second half of 2018 when its \$30 million greenfields Creamery Complex is complete.

The investment is understood to be the largest private construction investment in the South West.

The complex includes a robotic dairy, a bespoke processing plant and leading global technology for filling equipment, along with agri-tourism facilities and new roads into the property.

"We have a lot of work to do before committing to contracts. Securing contracts now would immediately put us under deadlines, which can compromise product quality and not something we would sign up for," Mrs Daubney said.

"We need to be cautious and take a longer-term view. We need to have everything right first and can deliver as promised."

Mrs Daubney said she was regularly in contact with Mrs Rinehart and her encouragement, support and faith in agriculture helped the family-run business through tougher days.