AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENT WELCOMED IN THE NT: NTCA

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A recent wave of investment in sustainable agriculture across the Northern Territory is welcomed by the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association (NTCA).

"During the COVID era, a number of pastoral stations came and went from the property market," NTCA CEO Will Evans said. "When the world went into the pandemic, buyer behaviour gave a key indication of what locked-down citizens really valued."

Mr Evans said pastoralists were responsible custodians, looking after and caring for the land they work and live on.

"Some of today's NT pastoralists have the seventh generation of their family on the same property their ancestors settled. For many here, the granting of pastoral leases has not only been a lifetime commitment but a multi-generational commitment, and a way of life handed down to their children and their children's children.

"As an industry we have outlasted countless governments, ministers, officials and departments. Through good times and bad we have endured and persevered through hardship, difficulty and unimaginable loss. What remains from these periods is our industry, our people and the land.

A land, bought and paid for, by the very sweat that has dripped from the brows and the hands of those who have gone before us, with the rights of pastoralists to work their leasehold land sustainably and protected by the law.

"Each year the Territory clears less land than Tasmania. Where traditionally this lack of development has been seen as a setback for the NT pastoral industry, new waves of investment are seeking to take advantage of certification schemes like organic production to maximise the value of cattle and harness the NT's environmental credentials."

Mr Evans said on the on the back of this wave of demand, a number of agricultural businesses have seen the opportunity to expand into new territory, leading to ongoing growth in the Northern

Territory agricultural sector.

One of those seeking greener pastures is Queensland's Bunderra Cattle Company. Originally from Rockhamption, Bunderra owner Kevin Pickersgill and his family purchased Murranji Station south-west of Daly Waters on the Barkly Tablelands during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To Bunderra's portfolio of eight cattle properties covering 100,000 hectares in Central Queensland, Murranji Station now adds more than 447,000 hectares grass plains, lancewood and bulwaddy country.

"We purchased Murranji because of the unique opportunity to expand our organic breeding," Mr Pickersgill said. "Without a history of heavy land clearing or chemical usage, the Territory is attractive to investors because of the near pristine environment on the pastoral estate.

"We've invested heavily in cattle that are suitable for the Barkly and see this as a huge opportunity for the Territory. We've bought into the history of the Territory and when the times comes, I want to proudly be able to pass Murranji on to the next generation."

At the time of the purchase RuralCo Property agent Andy Gray said the sale highlighted buyers' confidence in the northern ag-market, despite global challenges and uncertainties.

"We need food production, that is essential irrespective of what the economic environment is," he said.

NTCA CEO Will Evans agreed with the sentiment.

"The NT Cattlemen's Association welcomes investment in sustainable agriculture across the Northern Territory.

"But there must be strong, clear leadership from our governments to protect the pastoral estate against environmental accidents, and our pastoralists have to be able to place their trust in the government to get this right. To do this properly. To live up to what has been promised."

https://www.ntca.org.au/news/2022/may/31/agricultural-investment-welcomed-nt-ntca