

Arla Foods buys White Clover

Advertisement

Holland dairy employs 170

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HOLLAND — The largest employer in the town of Holland in southwest Brown County has been sold.

Arla Foods, a worldwide dairy products corporation based in Denmark, announced Thursday its acquisition of White Clover Dairy in Holland.

Representatives of White Clover said they could not answer any questions about the sale until late today, as some details are pending.

White Clover has three divisions and 170 employees. About 125 dairy farms in Brown, Calumet and Outagamie counties supply milk to White Clover.

Arla is Europe's largest dairy group and employs 22,000 people worldwide.

In Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, it purchases about 2.2 billion liters of milk from farmers per year.

Arla's first venture into the North American market came in 2004 when it purchased the National Cheese Co. of Canada.

A press release posted on Arla's Canadian Web site said the purchase of White Clover Dairy is similar to the Canadian purchase two years ago.

"As the Canadian operations have more than met our expectations, we are keen to repeat the success in the U.S.," said Finn Hansen, executive director of Arla's Overseas Division.

The press statement said the Holland operation will initially produce about 5,000 tons of cheese per year, but the plant could produce up to 15,000 tons.

"By buying White Clover, Arla acquires production of added value edam and gouda (cheeses)," the press release said.

Arla currently sells several Danish specialty cheeses — havarti, feta and Danish blue — in the American market.

White Clover was founded in 1897 when a group of southern Brown County dairy farmers organized the company to jointly market their milk.

Henry Fassbender purchased the company in 1905.

It has remained in the Fassbender family until now, the exception being when it was owned by Nestle Foods from October 1976 to December 1980.