

Beston bulks up cheese sales with loyal customers

CAMERON ENGLAND

BESTON Global Food Company is consistently selling more than 500 metric tonnes of mozzarella per month, with repeat customers playing a big part.

The SA diversified food company said it had made "sig-

nificant gains in new business, at attractive margins... over the past five months in both the retail and food service sectors".

"Growth has been achieved through growing relationships with existing customers and by adding new accounts."

Beston said production had been ramped up in May last

year to 500 tonnes, with 30 per cent of that underpinned by a contract to one large Australian company.

Until recently, the balance had been sold to food service companies on an introductory trial basis and into the spot market.

"Over the last five months

the pattern of sales has bedded down such that it is now virtually all committed to repeat customers".

Chief executive Jonathan Hicks said the company had swapped out agents for its own sales team in all mainland states, which created better relationships with customers.

Mr Hicks said the growth in repeatable sales was leading to better capacity utilisation and overhead recoveries.

The company said it had also discontinued work on a possible merger of a subsidiary with technology company Data Dot. Beston shares closed 0.5c higher at 12c.



GROWTH: Beston chief executive Jonathan Hicks.

Holiday home vision a reality for kids charity

GIUSEPPE TAURIELLO

A FIVE-YEAR vision to build a holiday home for families affected by autism and cerebral palsy will become a reality later this year.

After years of planning and fundraising, children's charity Living Without Limits (LWL) has acquired a block of land at Goolwa, where it will soon start building its House of Respite.

The project has been the primary mission of the foundation since it was established in 2012 by Adelaide property developer Steve Maras, Universal Motor Auctions director Phillip de Pinto and BDO partner George Yatzis.

Since then, the charity has raised more than \$750,000, and has contributed close to \$150,000 on initiatives to support children with a disability.

Mr Maras, whose 11-year-old son has a mild form of cerebral palsy, said the new home would support families struggling with expensive therapies and other costs.

"When we established the foundation we decided we would first help with small initiatives," he said.

"We bought 10 iPads for kids down at the Women's and Children's Hospital, we bought a bus for the autistic school at Ashford and we have put on the London Bus every year at the Christmas pageant.

"Then we wanted to do something a bit more tangible and we thought about the families that are hard up, got little to no spare money because their funds go on therapies – too many people out there are doing it really tough.

"What they don't often get is a holiday so we thought, let's



GOOD TIMES: Novita will operate a new holiday home for families affected by disabilities.

Picture: KERYN STEVENS/AAP

build a house – this has been five years in the making."

LWL has engaged Novita to operate the home, which is expected to welcome up to 50 families each year.

Designed to accommodate children with a range of disabilities, the home will include a sensory room and a play-ground designed for children with special needs. It will be completed by December.

Novita chief executive Greg Ward said many families affected by disability found it difficult to holiday due to lack of accessibility and cost.

"The LWL House of Respite at Goolwa will support many of our Novita families and others in need across SA to enjoy a well-earned break," he said.

"Novita will manage the home, and with the generous support of the community we

anticipate that using the respite house will come at minimal or no cost."

Mr de Pinto, whose nine-year-old son was diagnosed with autism in 2011, said support from the business community had been "phenomenal". "CMI Toyota has donated a Toyota Yaris for our gala dinner and together with AP Eagers, they've been our biggest donors," he said.

"We've engaged Sarah Constructions to build the house at Goolwa and they've made it their graduate philanthropic project of the year, with 12 terrific graduates working on the design, tendering and supervision of the project."

LWL's annual gala dinner will be held at the Entertainment Centre tonight. It is expected to raise \$150,000 for the House of Respite project.

Looking to future key for success at Coopers

PAULA THOMPSON

COOPERS operations manager Nick Sterenberg believes it's crucial businesses embrace industry 4.0 – the current trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies.

Mr Sterenberg is one of the guest speakers at the Food South Australia summit being held at Adelaide Oval on Wednesday next week.

He said the danger to industry was taking too long in making a plan, rather than actually taking action.

"There are lots of stories out there about what people should and could be doing before industry 4.0," he said.

"But if you don't make a start, you'll find the gap between you and your competitors will widen quickly."

"Businesses need to start a journey of mechanisation, automation and digitisation now or the SA food manufacturing sector could be left behind."

"One of the key points is digitisation, because whatever you're doing in that space now, you're likely to be redoing again in five years time because platforms and technologies are changing so quickly."

"If you don't already have a strategic plan in place, you've got to work on your strategic imperatives."

Despite the rising interest in craft beer, Mr Sterenberg said this had actually been a positive for the overall sector including larger companies like Coopers.

"What craft beer has done has got people interested in beer again but if you look at their percentage of the market, it's not particularly large," he said.

"People still want to drink Coopers Pale Ale or West End Draught."

AgTech options explored

OPPORTUNITIES to grow South Australia's AgTech sector will be top of the agenda for Primary Industries Minister Tim Whetstone who is travelling to Israel as part of an Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce Trade Mission.

AgTech has been identified by the State Government as a key growth area to help South Australian farmers boost agri-

culture to a \$100 billion industry in Australia by 2030.

"Israel has more than 750 active start-ups and companies operating in the food tech and AgTech sectors, so there are enormous opportunities to better understand how South Australia can benefit from greater adoption and commercialisation of technologies," Mr Whetstone said.

AusNet appoints new MD

AUSNET has appointed Tony Narvaez as managing director of the Victorian electricity network operator, replacing the retiring Nino Ficca.

Mr Narvaez is currently chief executive of Endeavour Energy, the electricity distribution network operator for Greater Western Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Southern Highlands and the Illawarra.

"Tony has outstanding leadership qualities and capability and brings with him extensive experience in the Australian energy sector," chairman Peter Mason said.

"He is ideally suited to lead the company to achieve our ambition for ongoing sustainable growth and strong financial performance while delivering value."

TPG hits back over merger

TPG has followed through on its legal fightback against the ACCC, seeking orders in the federal court that its proposed merger with Vodafone would not hurt competition in the telecoms sector.

On May 8, the ACCC ruled against the proposed merger between the two telcos, saying it was likely to prevent TPG entering as fourth player in

the mobile networks market and therefore cut competition in the sector.

But TPG has argued that Australia's move to effectively ban Chinese telecoms supplier Huawei from participating in the building of Australia's 5G means it will have to shelve any ambition to become a mobile services supplier.