

The Daily Telegraph



Family's stand against miners

- Samantha Townsend and Nic Christensen
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North West grain grower George Clift is fed up with foreign investors buying up prime Australian farming country. Picture by Peter Lorimer.

Source: The Daily Telegraph

WHEN a Chinese mining company wanted to buy the land George Clift's family has farmed for 180 years, his answer was a simple "no".

"My family came out in army ships, they've been to war, given their life for this country and it's up to us to look after the land that Australia has given us," the 81-year-old said.

The fifth-generation farmer, who runs a 5260ha mixed property with his sons and grandson at Caroona near Gunnedah in the state's north west, is fed up with the Federal Government allowing foreign investors to buy large parcels of land for food and mining.

"It's terrible the Government has let this happen because it's mad for money," Mr Clift said.

"We have the best country in the world and we are the only country in the world that sells our country. It's utterly and simply horrible to think the future generations will have nothing."

He said Chinese company Shenhua Watermark Coal had bought out several neighbouring properties for "top dollar" - up to four times their value.

A subsidiary of the China Shenhua Energy Company, which is 68 per cent government-owned, Shenhua has committed to pay \$5 million in community funds. So far it has paid out \$2 million - half for a GP super medical clinic and the rest divided between 12 other groups.

The company did not return calls yesterday.

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