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Producers demand price increase

Namibia's dairy producers are demanding a price increase on raw milk to avert both milk shortages in the country and the collapse of the industry. Fears are that milk producers who, like any other consumer, absorb price increases on fuel and other costs, may be forced to close their operations.

The industry has been having problems. Two years ago it was about the pressure of imported and more competitively priced milk. This time, though, the Dairy Producers Association of Namibia (DPA) said there were no price increases for the past two years on fresh milk. "The reason for this state of affairs is that the producers did not receive any price increase for the past two years and instead they had to accept a price reduction of 10 cents per litre on raw milk in the middle of 2005," said Japie Engelbrecht, chairman of the DPA.

Engelbrecht said if the price increases on raw milk are not implemented shortly, nine producers in the areas of north-east Gobabis who are the most affected, "will not go ahead". Consequently, this will also result in a shortage of milk locally because the producers, although small-scale, account for between 30 000 to 70 000 litres of the total milk production, he added. The norm has been that the dairy producers have a price increase in June every year, although they had to settle for a decrease. – *New Era*

Dairy farmers stop production

Dairy farmers in Zimbabwe have stopped milk production in protest over government-imposed price controls. The protest has resulted in a countrywide shortage of milk and dairy products. The government, which has imposed price controls on most basic food commodities, has pegged the price of milk at \$1 050 per litre, a price dairy farmers say, falls far short of meeting production costs even without ensuring viability.

"We have stopped milk production until the government heeds our call to leave market forces to determine the price," said Ezra Ndlovu, an executive board member of the National Association of Dairy Farmers (NADF). "Input and production costs are very high and therefore we can't operate in such an environment with continued interference," said Ndlovu.

Dairy farmers are demanding a review of milk prices from the current price to at least \$3 000 per litre. They also insist that government should have nothing to do with the pricing of dairy products as they are no subsidising farmers in the running of dairy farms. The Minister of Industry and International Trade, Obert Mpfu, was not available for comment. – *Zimbabwe Independent*

New regional partnerships for EAC

The four East African Community (EAC) member countries of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda have announced plans to harmonise policies and training in their respective dairy industries, in a bid to promote integration in the sector. According to the technical manager of the Kenya Dairy Board, Philip Cheronu, dairy authorities from the four countries have drafted a memorandum of understanding to be signed soon that will ensure intra-regional trade in dairy products among these countries.

Export markets require high-quality milk, according to the KDB. For this reason, the board and other stakeholders will collaborate to train milk handlers in clean milk production, hygienic handling and transportation. The board foresees an increase in processed milk, from 340 million litres last year, to 400 million litres by the end of 2007.

The countries also plan to establish an East Africa Dairy Regulatory Authority Council to address and settle dairy disputes in the EAC member countries. The Kenya Dairy Board had accredited 31 dairy business service providers

in the country to guide and advise dairy farmers on how to improve their production. Thirty more will be accredited next year to meet the rising demand.

KDB has also introduced the 'Business Services Promotion' (BDS) approach in collaboration with SITE Enterprise Promotion and the International Livestock Research Institute, to help address the specific needs of various industry players.

The country's milk production increased from 3,2 billion litres in 2004 to 3,8 billion litres in 2005. Indications are that this year's output level will surpass last year's. The dairy sub-sector supports over a million smallholder dairy households and is responsible for an estimated 500 000 jobs in support services. – *The Nation*

Kenyan farmers told to enlist

All dairy farmers in Kenya will be registered to ease export trade, says the Kenya Dairy Board. The board's managing director, Machira Gichohi, said that farmers who do not register with the industry regulator by the end of April, will not be allowed to market their milk abroad – especially in Europe. Gichohi said the board would also start teaching the farmers how to use modern technology, such as the Internet and mobile phones, to market their milk both locally and internationally. – *The Nation*

Price cut amid tremendous growth

New Kenya Cooperative Creameries (New KCC) has reduced milk prices paid to producers, drawing angry reactions from dairy farmers. The farmers argue that the move is likely to hurt the dairy sector. In a letter to farmers, management stated that the reduction was necessitated by increased supply of milk to New KCC factories and cooling plants.

The firm said that farmers would be paid Sh16 a litre, instead of Sh17. The price drop came into effect in February. The Kenya Federation of Agricultural Producers (Kenfap) said the price cut would adversely affect farmers who had secured bank loans. The chairman of the federation's dairy division, Joseph Ng'era, said farmers could not plan and budget when they were not assured of stable prices.

The letter, signed by managing director Francis Mwangi, attributed the increased milk production to the favourable weather. "Consequently, milk intake by New KCC has increased tremendously and the trend is still continuing. New KCC is therefore forced to convert most of the milk into powder, UHT and other milk products like butter which are very expensive to produce and store compared to fresh milk," the circular states.

Ng'era on his part said the cost of diesel, petrol and electricity which farmers were using to power equipment including tractors, maize choppers and feed mixers, had shot up in recent years. "Similarly, the cost of artificial insemination, drugs and cattle feeds among others had also gone up," he said. "We now fear that the move by the New KCC would prompt other private milk processors to lower their prices to the detriment of farmers," the Kenfap official said.

The Kenya Dairy Board (KDB) manager said the dairy sub-sector in the region had registered tremendous growth in the past two years. He said the New KCC cooling plant in Nakuru was receiving an estimated 30 000 litres of milk daily while that in Molo was receiving 20 000 litres. He added that the Eldama Ravine cooling plant was receiving 20 000 litres daily. – *The Nation*

Mad cow ban affects dairy imports

The Chief Executive of Farm Africa, Dr Christie Peacock, has urged the Ugandan government to lift a ban imposed in 1996 on livestock imports from Britain, due to mad cow's disease. This will enable farmers to secure breeding stocks and boost the livestock industry in Uganda. Peacock said Kenya and other European Union countries have already lifted the ban on livestock imports from Britain, and that Uganda should emulate them.

"We will lift the ban cautiously, because we are still not prepared to handle the disease once it breaks out," said the State Minister for Animal Industry, Bright Rwamirama. – *New Vision*

Virtual market for Ghana farmers

Farmers in Ghana will soon be introduced to an innovative agricultural market information

service which will help them sell their produce across Africa. The new service, known as TradeNet, will enable farmers and traders across the continent to share and fix prices of various agricultural products through the use of mobile phone text messages.

Farmers who sign up for the service will receive SMS alerts on whatever commodity they are interested in and also where the product is available. Mark Davies who developed TradeNet, said that his outfit was working in collaboration with the various farmers and traders unions to ensure that the technology was simplified. – *Joy Business Report*

Anthrax claims cattle in Zimbabwe

An estimated 200 cattle have died due to anthrax in Masvingo over the past two months – this amid growing fears that more cattle deaths could occur in the province. The outbreak has also been cited as the biggest threat to Masvingo's efforts to restock its beef herd, which was almost halved in 1992's nationwide devastating drought. Masvingo governor, Cde Willard Chiwewe, urged government to prioritise the procurement of anthrax vaccines to contain the outbreak.

Most of the anthrax was contracted from wild animals such as buffaloes found mostly in conservancies in the Lowveld. Anthrax killed about 1 500 wild animals in Gonarezhou National Park in 2005. – *The Herald*

Young Farmers Fund for Botswana

Botswana's Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (Ceda) is currently working on the modalities of administering the Young Farmers Fund, which was set up by government to encourage the youth to go into farming. Oabile Regoeng, public relations manager at Ceda, said that agriculture is one of the sectors that the government identified as an engine of economic growth.

According to Regoeng, government saw the need to create an environment favourable for the production and marketing of agricultural products. He added, however, that the long-term success in growing the economy depends

on the ability of young farmers to benefit from this fund and increase agricultural production as part of a diversified and sustainable economy.

– *The Reporter*

Cattle rustling rampant in Gambia

Members of the National Assembly in Gambia have deplored numerous incidences of cattle rustling in the country. It has urged the Department of State for Agriculture to fully implement the Gambia Livestock Marketing Bill of 2006. According to Kebba Touray, the national assembly member for Illiasa, cattle rustling is now rampant in the country, especially in the rural areas, where most of the farmers' livelihoods are dependent on it.

The Department of Livestock Services was urged to ensure that livestock dealers are legally issued with a license to help in the identification of rustlers. The department was also asked to facilitate the buying and selling of livestock by establishing depots in all the roving markets and other markets in the country. – *The Daily Observer*

Uganda gets major farming loan

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved a \$45,13 million loan to help Uganda upgrade agriculture infrastructure. "The specific objectives of the project are to enhance farmers' access to markets, attract competitive prices and increase income through improvements in rural infrastructure and their management," the bank said in a statement.

An estimated 35% of the country's population will benefit from the project, said the AfDB, which is based in Tunis, Tunisia. The money will also be used to repair 390 km district roads, 3 510 km community access roads, annual routine and recurrent maintenance of 587 km roads and 5 267 km of community access roads. Uganda has won \$1,27 billion of loans from the bank to finance 100 projects in the last 39 years. – *New Vision DMA*