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Briefly | Africa

Drought slows down dairy economy

The situation Eastern Africa is rather serious, Moses Nyabila, Rates dairy specialist told Dairy Mail Africa early in 2006. Given the fact that the same weather pattern has prevailed in Uganda and northern Tanzania, East Africa is experiencing a general shortage of milk, said Nyabila.

Things may be worse for Rwanda and Tanzania, seeing as they depend to a greater extent on long-life milk imported from Kenya and Uganda. If it does not rain before March-April the situation is likely to get worse – especially for those small-holders who do not keep significant quantities of hay, said Nyabila.

Milk firms accused of exploitation

The Kenyan Dairy Board (KDB) has accused local milk processors of exploiting consumers by charging high prices. The board chairman, Reuben Chesire, said the processors who have increased milk prices by Sh10 per litre should justify the hike.

Chesire said that the processors were not passing the benefits to the farmers. He accused the processors of taking advantage of the liberalised dairy industry and the ongoing drought to exploit consumers and farmers.

KDB managing director, Machira Gichohi, admitted that the board that regulates the industry had no powers over the processors. “Producer prices have gone up marginally over the last two months, but the margin to the farmers was too small compared to prices the consumers were currently paying,” he said. He also accused the processors of creating a crisis situation, citing that milk production was still high across the country, despite the on-going drought.

Meanwhile, top managers from the Kenya Cooperative Creameries (KCC) have asked consumers to prepare to pay even more for milk products. KCC chairman, Matu Wamae, said KCC had increased the farmers pay from Sh18 to Sh19, and the same might be passed over to consumer. Wamae said that at the beginning of 2006, farmers who delivered their produce to the giant milk processor would receive an additional shilling per litre. “This is a decision that will definitely in-

crease the cost of milk and other dairy products. – *The East African Standard (Nairobi)*

Spilt milk

Figures from the FAO show that billions of shillings' worth of milk is lost each year in Eastern Africa and the Near East. Its three-year project aimed at helping countries cut losses in their dairy sectors shows that losses in the regions due to spoilage and waste average Sh6,7 billion per year.

The study, the first ever such analyses of economic losses in Africa's dairy sector, was conducted in five countries where the FAO is working with local producers and government agencies to reduce losses during production, transport and marketing. Initial findings show that in just three of the countries studied – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania – annual dairy losses amount to Sh4 billion.

In Kenya, around 95 million litres of milk are lost, valued at about Sh1,6 billion. Kenya produces 2,5 billion litres each year, while 1,35 billion litres are marketed, the study said.

Credit for Kenyan dairy farmers

The International Fund for Agriculture Development (Ifad) has given Sh11,2 billion credit to assist small-scale dairy farmers. The sector that employs over one million people will also benefit from a Sh60 million United Nations Development Agency grant.

“A special study based on detailed poverty data, has been carried out to identify the geographical areas where we will operate and the type of small-holder dairy farmer to be targeted,” said Ifad president, Lennart Bage.

Ifad also raised concern over poor hygiene in the handling and transportation of dairy products to the major cities, such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru. The urban dwellers consume 125-50 litres of milk per person every year. A statement by Ifad says the UN agency will work closely with the Livestock and Fisheries Ministry to help the farmers and mobile milk operators to become more market-oriented. It will also strengthen their ability to respond to market opportunities in the largely informal dairy sector.

Bage and the Kenyan ambassador to Italy, Anne Belinda Nyikuli, signed the loan agreement on behalf of the government. "This programme has many firsts in the Kenyan context and about 65% of those who will benefit are women," Bage said.

Over the next six years, the programme targeting the Nakuru central area and eight other districts in the west of the country, is expected to lead to an increase in milk production and farmers' income. – *The East African Standard (Nairobi)*

Agriculture picks up in Angola

In its latest regional food security bulletin, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (Fews Net) said official figures indicated that the Angolan agricultural production had increased significantly in the 2004/05 season.

The production of maize as a staple food, rose 33% from 600 000 mt in 2003/04 to 800 000 mt in 2004/05. Agriculture contributed 12% to Angola's gross domestic product, up from 8% the previous year. – *www.irinnews.org*

Governor takes over Gweru dairy farm

The governor and resident minister of the Zimbabwe Midlands, Cephas Msipa, has taken over Cheshire, a commercial dairy farm on the outskirts of Gweru. The farm that belonged to Graham Ingle, also produces flowers and passion fruit for export. Speaking to *The Zimbabwe Standard*, Ingle confirmed that Msipa had taken over the farm and would soon be moving onto the property. – *Zimbabwe Standard (Harare)*

Green light for DRC agricultural grant

The World Bank has approved a US\$125 million grant to help the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to help the country revamp its agricultural production and enhance food security. In a statement issued in Washington DC, the bank said the grant would provide extra financing for priority activities in the country that were not being paid for under its original Multi-sector Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project, approved in August 2002. "The project seeks to restore essential social services, build community infrastructure and strengthen government capacity to implement and manage medium- and long-term development programmes," the World Bank said. – *Farmers' Weekly*

Tensions in Moroccan dairy industry

The Moroccan dairy industry is experiencing tension because of dairy co-operatives' dissatisfaction. Since the beginning of 2005, co-operatives were subject to the same taxes as private companies. The threat to stop deliveries was finally put into place for one day during the month of the 2005 Ramadan, when there is usually a strong demand for dairy products. – *Milk report 2005*

Ethiopian produce picks up

Resettled farmers in Gura Ferda Woreda of the Bench-Madji Zone in Ethiopia collected over 27 600 quintals of produce, the zoned agriculture and rural development department said. Some 796 farmers resettled from Sidama, Gedee and Guraghe zones in 1996, have harvested sorghum, teff, rice, sesame, maize, onion, pepper and haricot bean, among others. The resettled farmers have already become food self-sufficient and 126 quintals of select seed was distributed among them for the next rainy season. – *The Ethiopian Herald (Addis Ababa)*

A case of neglect?

Cattle products are Uganda's fourth main export, according to the demographic survey of 2004, but the neglect of pastoralists' needs affects their produce. The drought, for instance, explains why the milk prices have been unstable – previously, a litre cost Shs900, now it costs Shs1,200. The price keeps fluctuating because the cattle are producing less milk due to the drought.

The good news is that the rains have started and the milk production may increase and eventually, the prices of milk may also reduce. However, the current rains are likely to be short lived according to weather experts. The New Vision in January quoted George Obua, acting head of the Department of Meteorology saying that "these unseasonable rains are not part of the main March to May rain season."

Pastoralists in Uganda face many problems such as lack of grazing, easy spread of ticks and diseases. Lack of water and the long distances they walk in search of pasture also make them vulnerable. Early in 2006, the Minister of Water, Lands and Environment announced that water tankers were going to be taken to the affected districts by the government. – *The New Vision*

Growth projections halved in Kenya

Kenya Dairy Board managing director Machira Gichohi said the dairy sub-sector, which recorded the highest improvement in agriculture last year, might have its growth projections halved. "We are only projecting up to 20% growth, down from 35% recorded last year," he said. Last year's production peaked at about 300 million litres, but a rise in consumer prices was projected for this year. Production in other areas might also be lowered as the impact of the drought is felt.

In the formal dairy processing sub-sector, milk deliveries increased by 18,8% in the first nine months of 2005, according to the Central Bank's monthly economic review for October 2005. The bank said the increase reflected the expanding role of KCC in processing milk and favourable weather conditions that prevailed in the first nine months of last year.

Last year, the 34 processors handled close to 308 million litres that led to a 35% growth in the sub-sector. While this was the highest performance in the agriculture sector, whose growth stagnated at just 1,3%, projected growth for the dairy sub-sector will come down to 20%, according to dairy board performance records.

High bird flu risk in Africa

The outbreak of the deadly Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (H5N1) in Nigeria confirms the fears expressed by the FAO for quite some time that African countries are facing a high risk of becoming infected by the virus. "The outbreak in Kaduna state in Northern Nigeria proves that no country is risk-free and that we are facing a serious international crisis," said Samuel Jutzi, director of the FAO's Animal Production and Health Division.

"It is important that local and national authorities within other countries in the region remain vigilant for possible outbreaks of suspected avian influenza in poultry and other birds. It is vital that all instances of multiple bird deaths are reported to authorities and investigated promptly," Jutzi said.

The FAO warned people to avoid any contact with obviously diseased or dead birds, maintain personal hygiene after handling poultry or poultry meat and should cook chicken meat and eggs properly. The FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) will send veterinary experts to Nigeria to assess the situation and examine how the virus has been introduced. – FAO (Rome) **DMA**

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