

Conference & Exhibition  
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The Future is ?

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Zambian president, Levi Mwanawasa, called on the continent to identify appropriate dairy technologies that will address challenges

# The future is technology

by Fidelis Zvomuya

*Zambian President, Levi Mwanawasa, has bemoaned the low levels of milk production in the African continent, saying the growth of less than 1% was not good, especially when world production is on the increase.*

Officially opening the 3rd Eastern and Southern African Dairy Association (Esada) Conference and Exhibition held recently in Lusaka, Zambia, Mwanawasa said the ration of milk supplied for processing in most African countries, was less than 10% of the milk produced worldwide.

“However, it is encouraging to note that most countries in Africa are beginning to show positive trends to redress the situation. Our countries must increase milk production in order to meet the increasing demand locally,” he said.

### Smallholder potential

Mwanawasa strongly called for support of smallholder dairy farmers, saying responsible African governments will only render support to the dairy sector if peasant farmers are taken aboard. "It would not do for Esada to concentrate on promoting commercial dairy farmers at the expense of small producers. "Smallholder dairy farming has high potential for improving food security, nutrition and income among the continent's rural poor," he said.

The conference held under the theme "African Dairy: The Future is Technology" attracted more than 300 delegates and offered a great opportunity for regional and international dairy stakeholders to interact with experts, practitioners, investors, researchers and policy makers in the dairy industry.

The conference also comes at a time when all the continent's stakeholders are engaged in intense debates on the future of the industry, which is faced by a rise in cheap milk products imports that are being dumped on the local market, threatening to put many producers out of business.

### Technology

Mwanawasa said the continent must identify appropriate dairy technologies that will address challenges such as poor infrastructure, low levels of innovation, inadequate value addition to primary agricultural commodities and lack of market access.

He said there is a need for all role players in the industry to find long-term solutions to some of these challenges, in order to make dairy production sustainable. "The productivity of the continent's dairy sector is being hampered by natural factors such as floods, droughts and the outbreak of livestock diseases. This has seen Africa's share of trade dropping to just 2% of world trade with no improvement in sight so far," the Zambian head of state said.



Esada executive director, Dr Kipkirui Arap Lang'at

### Small-scale growth

Esada chairperson, Sandress Nyirenda, called for the continent's political leadership to promote the growth of small-scale dairy farmers. Nyirenda said there are a lot of areas in the industry that need to be improved. His organisation has been helping to promote growth of the industry in the region since 2000. "In order for the continent to meet the existing ever-increasing continental demand for dairy products, the African dairy industry must move to find methods to improve farm productivity, reduce supply chain losses, increase the range of finished products and improve product quality," he said.

Esada executive director, Kip Lang'at, said the conference was meant to take the "farm-to-the-table" approach by highlighting opportunities for the sector's investment in the continent. Lang'at said the conference and the exhibition provided a platform for the continent and global dairy community to discuss and recommend solutions to policy, regulatory and industry bottlenecks that impede trade in dairy products. **DMA**