

Conserving a legacy

Milk looks simple enough when poured from a carton. However, behind the scenes is a complex system of hard work, professionalism, dedication and commitment.

This is true of millions of smallholder dairy farmers in Africa who milk indigenous breeds, yielding an average of 5 l per day.

Nearly 3 million people in Africa are directly tied to livestock and dairy farming. The cost of milk is a question of land use, where farmers lack inputs, technical knowledge, technology and hybrids. Most farmers in Africa still run relatively small indigenous herds and raise their own feed crops. This is a relatively benign use of the land, a means of protecting open space and a more acceptable form of stewardship.

In one of our stories, we look at the dying African indigenous livestock. These breeds are mainly used for milk production in many African countries but are set to become extinct owing to droughts, the introduction of sexed semen and cross breeding.

According to one expert, the world has to accept that contrary to the traditional thinking, African chicken, cattle, goat and sheep represent a unique genetic resource for improvement of productivity; after all, they have produced, survived and fed millions of people throughout history.

On a sad note, we also look at the Zimbabwean dairy sector with a farmer bemoaning the death of a dream when her farm of 800 dairy cows, which used to produce up to 25 000 l of milk per day, was invaded. This has had a negative effect on milk production in a country that has seen its milk production slowly drying up and now has to rely on imports from South Africa.



Lastly, we look at a Rwandese genocide victim who is now making a living from dairy farming. A clear example of a brimming dairy industry in what was once Africa's blood bath.

Happy reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tonyan". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Contributions editor