



# Esada News

by Moses Nyabila, technical advisor for the Eastern and Southern African Dairy Association (Esada)

## East Africa cheese championships

South African-based agricultural organisation, Agri-Expo, joined hands with the Eastern and Southern African Dairy Association (Esada) to stage the first Esada cheese championships at the end of August 2006. The championships coincided with the Premier East African Cheese Festival that was held at the Carnivore grounds in Nairobi, Kenya.

An encouraging 62 cheeses in 27 different classes were entered in the competition. Kobus Mulder, Agri-Expo's manager for dairy and an international cheese judge, acted as organiser and judge. He was assisted by three dairy officers from the Land O'Lakes programme.

The winners of the various categories included Sun Power Dairy, Eldoville, New Kenya Cooperative Creameries, Raka, Valley Dairy and Gouda Gold of Uganda. The overall winner was Sun Power Dairy. Their Brown's Haloumi was crowned best cheese on show. It scored 17,5 out of 20 points. In addition, they also won eleven other first prizes.

Exhibitors were briefed on defects and correctional measures during the prize-giving ceremony. Judging from the cheese makers' response, an improvement can be expected at the 2007 championships.

The appearance of most cheeses was of an acceptable to a high standard. However, a fair amount of improvement is necessary to the body and texture of the cheeses. These defects can be eliminated by paying attention to milk quality, pressing and moisture controls. Many cheeses had an acid flavour which can be corrected by improving culture selection and use.

## Renewed interest in cheese

With a *per capita* consumption of around 100 grams of cheese, Kenya has the potential to grow a blossoming cheese industry. However,

it needs the necessary promotional activities and improved quality. Enough milk is available for cheese production. Only a fraction of the estimated annual milk production of three billion litres is processed into cheese. A survey among chefs and other catering operations showed a willingness to use more cheese in recipes and dishes once a wider variety of good-quality products are available.

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## The future

During the Cheese Festival a number of local cheeseries were visited. Here constructive discussions took place regarding production and supply chain improvements. Retail outlets were also visited to discuss display and merchandising methods to improve sales. Training of local cheese makers will assist the local industry. Agri-Expo has been asked to play a meaningful role in this regard.

Esada and Kenyan cheese companies were encouraged by the outcome of the Premier East African Cheese Festival. Esada is considering making the Festival part of its annual calendar. It also plans to expand the concept to a number of towns and cities across the African continent.

Esada and its affiliate national associations are in the process of compiling and elaborating on cheese promotion and development programmes. This will include consumer education, cooking demonstrations, sampling, in-store promotions, skills development and investment promotion. Esada hopes that this will lead to increased consumption and production of cheese, as it is currently lagging far behind other regions. **DMA**