

Briefly | Africa

Sameer UHT and powder milk plant

The Sameer Group of Kenya reportedly plans to construct an \$8,5 million ultra-high temperature (UHT) and powder milk plant in the Ugandan district, Mbarara, to solve the problem of milk wastage. The new plant is set to produce 80 000 litres of UHT and 100 000 litres of powder milk.

The Ugandan Parliament is currently investigating how the Ugandan Dairy Corporation (UDC) was leased to the Sameer Group without the necessary documents, including a business plan, being made available. The Ugandan Government and the Sameer Group signed a ten-year lease agreement in June 2006. Sameer Agriculture and Livestock (SALL) took control of UDC's assets in August. Under the deal, SALL is to pay \$500 000 for UDC and invest \$2 million in the plant. The company will spend another \$8,5 million on building the new factory.

Within the next two to three years, milk production in Uganda is expected to reach 200 000 litres a day, from the current 30 000-60 000 litres per day. Meanwhile, the Ugandan Dairy Corporation's milk production has increased from 25 000 to 52 000 litres daily. – *Food and Beverage Reporter*

Zimbabwe Dairibord boss arrested

Dairibord Zimbabwe Limited managing director, Benson Samudzimu, was recently arrested for arbitrarily increasing milk prices without authority from the Ministry of Industry and International Trade. Police confirmed that they arrested the Samudzimu. Police spokesman Chief Inspector Andrew Phiri said he was charged with contravening regulations that deal with increasing prices of goods without the authority of the Ministry of Industry and International Trade. The spokesman, however, could not give much detail on the price increases allegedly made by the Samudzimu.

Phiri said police had their surveillance teams in place, which monitored all prices in stores countrywide. This move by government is aimed at curtailing unwarranted prices. The

exercise was also necessitated by the general outcry from the consumers regarding over-priced items. Phiri said that 600 companies had been ticketed to date. – *The Herald*

Farmers need the Internet

William Metzger, the director of London-based International Business Concepts, says farmers in Africa need to adapt to using the Internet. He says it is the only way forward for their development in this information era: "Through the Internet, farmers would instantly access information about crop diseases, resistant varieties and prevention measures, which results in good yields. They would also know about the prevailing market conditions," he said.

Metzger recently presented a paper with the theme "Information Technology for Development" during a seminar organised by the Ugandan-based Information and Communications Technology Association (ICTA). Charles Basajja, the chairman of ICTA, said they are lobbying government to establish Internet hot-spots all over Uganda for people to access it. – *New Vision*

Zim minister admits food shortage

The Zimbabwean government has admitted to suffering a food shortage, *Zim Online* reported. It quoted Joseph Made, the agriculture minister, as saying the country did not harvest enough food last season and that an army-led programme to produce food, had failed. "The country has already imported maize to cater for the deficit. We will continue to import food if the need arises," said Made. The government has until recently insisted that Zimbabwe harvested around 1,8 million tons of the staple maize from the 2005/06 season, enough to meet national consumption.

Maize meal, the main food for more than 90% of the 12 million Zimbabweans, is in short supply especially in southern Matabeleland. Made said Operation Maguta, a scheme under which soldiers were moved onto former white farms to produce crops such as maize and wheat, failed because of lack of resources. – *Sapa*

Ethiopian farmer training centres

Thirteen farmer training centres around Bulehora in the Ethiopian state, Oromia, are ready to open their doors to farmers, the Woreda Rural Development Coordination Office said. Office head, Berriso Zewde, said that his government provided 780 000 birr. The public contributed free labour and material support for the construction of the training centres. Zewde said that two of the training centres have already started operations by receiving 70 farmers. The rest will start service after being equipped with the necessary materials. – *The Ethiopian Herald*

Defence training with a difference

Namibia's largest multi-purpose agricultural co-operative, Agra, recently held a training course for farm workers in conjunction with the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF). The CCF is a Namibian non-profit trust dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystem. The course taught workers about livestock management and how to resolve conflict with predators. Twenty farm workers from the north-central farm area, attended the course at the CCF headquarters outside Otjiwarongo in Namibia. – *The Namibian*

Universities must be more practical

Janet Museveni, the Ugandan first lady and member of parliament for Ruhama County, has urged tertiary institutions to focus on teaching practical agriculture. "I wish all universities in the country could conduct practical agriculture lectures like Mountains of the Moon University, because agriculture means a lot in the lives of Ugandans," she said while addressing students of the University in Fort Portal town. She observed that if agriculture was emphasised at all education levels, government leaders would find fighting poverty, easier. – *The Monitor*

Problems plague Zim agriculture ministry

The Zimbabwean Ministry of Agriculture is at its weakest to deliver due to under-funding, high staff turnover and internal expansion without replacement of workers. Simon Pazvakavambwa, the Ministry's permanent secretary, said there had been no recruitment of staff to meet the current expansion drive due to a freeze imposed by the state. The Ministry has no resources for most of its activities due to under-funding.

Pazvakavambwa recently presented this evidence to the parliamentary portfolio committee on land, land reform, resettlement and agriculture. He said that when he joined the ministry last year, restructuring was underway. New departments were created without extra personnel being brought in. Some employees were quitting out of frustration. He stopped some of the restructuring processes, as the Public Service Commission had frozen recruitment of staff. – *The Zimbabwean Herald*

Uganda to modernise agriculture

The Ugandan-based Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), has launched a three-month sh50 million media campaign in the country's Luweero district. The campaign is supported by the Danish International Development Agency's agriculture sector programme support. The theme is "Working together, earning higher incomes." At the launch at Luweero district playground, state minister for gender and culture, Lukia Nakadama, said that the key message in the campaign is to remind women to support each other in order to create wealth. – *New Vision*

Millions could starve

The food shortage crisis in three Southern African countries is far from over. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has appealed for \$78 million to provide emergency aid to millions of people. "We had hoped to scale back our activities in 2005 following two massive regional aid operations over the past two years, but unfortunately the crisis in parts of Southern Africa is far from over," the WFP said in Johannesburg. "Early next year, the lives of almost two million people will be at risk."

Mike Sackett, WFP regional director, said the money was needed to provide emergency aid to 1,85 million people in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland in the first half of next year. The three countries suffered extremely poor harvests this year due to drought and the effects of poverty and HIV/Aids.

Malawi's cereal crop was estimated to be 17% less than the five-year average. In Lesotho, the 2003 winter harvest failed, and improved rains early this year came too late to save the maize crop, which was estimated to be 68% below the average. Lowveld areas in Swaziland

were hit by both a late start of the rainy season and below normal rainfall. That country's maize crop was estimated to be 30% less than the average.

Sackett said WFP would also assist thousands of other "chronically poor and food-insecure" people in these three countries, as well as in Zambia and Mozambique as part of a longer term operation. This programme would run for three years. – Sapa

Livestock minister visits Namibia

Tanzania's Minister of Livestock Development, Dr Shukur Kawambwa, and his delegation recently visited Namibia on a fact-finding mission and to discuss matters of mutual interest especially in relation to livestock and animal health. He is being hosted by his Namibian counterpart, Dr Nickey Iyambo.

Among others, the delegation visited the government veterinary laboratory, the Neudamm Agricultural College and a resettlement farm in the Dorbabis area. The party also toured Namibia Dairies and experienced a stud auction at a farm in Lichtenstein West.

Namibia and Tanzania have had some excellent relationships dating back many years. Tanzania's livestock industry is well-known, with the Masai people forming the bulk of communal farmers in that country. It is expected that the two countries will benefit from each other's experiences, especially now that the land reform process is well under way. – *New Era*

Angola discusses rural women

The fourth Provincial Forum on Rural Women in Angola's central Benguela, was recently held to discuss pressing matters that face rural women. The two-day meeting was part of the celebrations for World Rural Women's Day celebrated on 15 October.

The meeting comprised four panels, namely "Economic promotion of rural women", "Communitarian development", "Added competence in rural families" and "Rural women and ecological challenge". The celebration programme started in early October and included several activities such as environmental education campaigns, tree planting, fund-raising and donations to needy communities. – *Angola Press Agency DMA*

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