



Position paper

Dairy for nutrition, employment and sustainability

An action agenda for the
Dutch contribution to dairy development
in Africa and Asia

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Dairy for nutrition, employment and sustainability

**An action agenda for the Dutch contribution to
dairy development in Africa and Asia**

Position paper
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This position paper is the product of valuable collaboration between many organisations. The process started with the organisation of the workshop “[Dairy, the motor for healthy growth](#)”, attended by 115 participants on 13 August 2019 in Nairobi. A follow-up meeting in Veenendaal, the Netherlands, was organised on 27 November 2019. Ninety participants joined this event on “Dairy Development in emerging economies: A motor for sustainable and healthy growth?” to discuss needs of, and challenges and opportunities for dairy development in emerging economies.

Both events were co-organised by AgriProFocus/Food & Business Knowledge Platform and the Netherlands East African Dairy Partnership (NEADAP), a consortium of SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Wageningen University & Research, Bles Dairies Consultancy and Agriterra. The WUR - LIQUID programme contributed to the Veenendaal event. The action agenda for the Dutch contribution to dairy development in Africa and Asia that is presented in this paper emerged from the discussions at these events and the input from various private-sector players, practitioners and experts.

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The events preceding, and the development of, this position paper have been facilitated by the Food & Business Knowledge Platform and AgriProFocus. In the course of 2020 these organisations merge into the [Netherlands Food Partnership \(NFP\)](#), whose aim is to accelerate the country’s contributions to SDG2. NFP will continue to organise the exchange of knowledge and support coalitions working on new dairy initiatives and programmes.

foreword

The world's population is growing rapidly and there are more and more mouths to feed. By 2030 we want to end hunger (SDG2) and ensure access to healthy, sustainable and safe food in sufficient quantities for everyone, while we also want to achieve the other SDGs, most notably those related to poverty, gender, inequality, sustainable production and consumption, climate action and protecting the environment. This requires a transformative change of our food systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the need to adjust our societies and economies to living with its effects provide an opportunity for change that can help us tackle the interwoven challenges of food security, climate change and international trade. In emerging economies, dairy development can play an important role in this. Milk and dairy products not only form part of a healthy diet for many people, they are also a source of income and rural employment. Manure from dairy livestock is used as an organic fertiliser that contributes to soil fertility and helps to close the nutrient cycle in agriculture. When locally produced dairy proteins are essential for a country, it should aim for a dairy sector which is sustainable and based on the principles of circular agriculture.

The Netherlands has long been a successful exporter of dairy products all over the world. This success is the result of strong collaboration among stakeholders, as this creates a climate that is conducive to innovation and production. The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs are very proud of this, but also feel a responsibility to share our expertise and experience as part of our contribution to finding solutions to global challenges. These increasingly complex and interrelated challenges cannot be solved by one party alone. That is why we stimulate the generation of coalitions by initiatives such as the Netherlands Food Partnership, because we believe we can contribute to addressing these global challenges by combining forces and getting things done together.

We are therefore very grateful for this paper as it makes available the experience of many stakeholders. Today the Netherlands supports an extensive portfolio of dairy development initiatives, and based on many years of experience this paper presents six leverage points and proposes an action agenda for dairy development in developing countries and emerging economies. The paper is intended to inform practitioners and policymakers on effective contributions to SDG2 and can be of use when designing new sustainable dairy programs. At a time when access to healthy nutritious foods is under further pressure as a result of the pandemic, this is all the more important.

In this way, we contribute to global food security – *together*.

Carola van Rijnsoever
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Ambassador Sustainable Development
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Guido Landheer
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Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

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Summary

This position paper presents an action agenda for Dutch dairy development support in African and Asian countries.

The Netherlands has a history of development and innovation in all agricultural sectors including dairy. Key to its success is the 'Dutch Diamond approach', a metaphor for the collaboration between private companies, knowledge institutions, civil society organisations and government bodies. This Dutch Diamond approach can also contribute to transitioning dairy in emerging economies towards successful, sustainable and inclusive dairy sectors.

The contributors to this paper represent all facets of the Dutch Diamond, working in the private sector, knowledge institutions, civil society organisations and government, and the paper is based on their extensive knowledge of and experience in dairy development in many African and Asian countries. They have drafted an action agenda to further unlock the potential of the Dutch Diamond to contribute to dairy development in developing countries and emerging economies. This action agenda is intended to serve as inspiration for existing and future dairy initiatives and programmes.

Dairy for nutrition, employment and sustainability

Dairy production and consumption can contribute to sustainable food and nutrition security. Dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt or butter are a culturally accepted source of high-quality protein and micronutrients for many people. In emerging economies, the demand for dairy products is on the increase, offering opportunities for the dairy sector. It can spur economic growth and increase employment, also for youth. Dairy production can also play a role in contributing to ecologically sustainable agro-food systems, provided developments are smart.

The action agenda presented in this paper aims to contribute to three objectives:

- 1 Affordable, safe and nutritious diets
- 2 Gainful employment and improved livelihoods
- 3 A sustained agro-ecological base.

Six leverage points to trigger change

The action agenda is based on a food systems approach and focuses on six key leverage points that are expected to trigger a cascade of positive changes in the dairy system. For each leverage point, an agenda for future support and investment priorities has been formulated. Together these form a comprehensive core agenda for all actors working in dairy development in developing and emerging economies.

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The first four leverage points directly relate to the production and consumption of dairy products:

1 Contribute to affordable and nutritious diets

Dairy can contribute to healthy nutrition. In particular, dairy products can be a valuable element in the diets of pregnant and breastfeeding women, children over the age of two, and adolescents. To unlock the potential of dairy to contribute to affordable and nutritious diets, this agenda proposes three themes for future support and investment:

- Increase access to affordable and good quality dairy products, for example through improved intra-household distribution, school milk programmes or milk dispensers.
- Increase consumer knowledge of healthy nutrition; interventions may be directed at consumer awareness, private-sector self-regulation or policy regulation.
- Develop and scale interventions to improve diets through dairy, based on a solid knowledge base.

2 Keep milk safe

Over the past years, there have been several scandals concerning the safety of milk. These incidents are a threat to human health, lower consumers' confidence in the sector, and place farmers' income at risk. Keeping milk safe is essential for a successful dairy sector.

To tackle this issue, the agenda proposes that support and investment are focused on three themes:

- Support consumer awareness and trust, through unbiased and trust-building communication with consumers.
- Assure quality by advancing quality-based milk payment systems, where farmers are rewarded for delivering quality milk.
- Develop laboratory capacity. Assessment and documentation of milk quality by a national reference laboratory is needed.

3 Strengthen inclusive and competitive business models

The dairy sector can contribute to an inclusive, healthy and sustainable food system. For this, all producer types including smallholder farmers, women and youth should be involved in business models. Inclusive business models, which deliver services and inputs for farmers and market their dairy products, also need to be competitive, with sufficient business and client focus. To promote inclusive *and* competitive business models, interventions should:

- Target the inclusion of smallholders, youth and women. Dairy cooperatives, producer organisations, and input suppliers can be instrumental in matching inclusivity with a business approach.
- Develop and support the scaling of successful business models for input and service delivery and milk marketing. Key success factors should be investigated.

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4 Make dairy sustainable

Dairy production can contribute to sustainable food systems, if developed carefully and integrally. At present, however, much dairy production contributes to environmental pollution and degradation. In developing countries, challenges include low productivity with high greenhouse gas emissions per unit of product, land degradation, competition for land, and manure overload in peri-urban areas. Ways should be found to increase production that are resilient and that restore rather than deplete the agro-ecological base. Future support and investment should:

- Couple dairy production to land for feed production. Priority should be given to upgrading low input–low output land-based dairy systems with own feed production and good herd management.
- Develop, pilot and scale sustainable dairy practices that contribute to people, planet and profit, with context-specific research and development trajectories.
- Assess, monitor and evaluate the sustainability of interventions, including their impact at system level and on dealing with trade-offs.

The other two leverage points are cross-cutting and concern the enabling environment of dairy business:

5 Strengthen future dairy professionals through training, education and extension

A successful dairy sector can only develop when there are sufficient dairy professionals with high standards of knowledge, skills and expertise, who can offer adequate services in a client and market-oriented way. Many developing countries have low levels of theoretical instruction, insufficient practical skills training, and a lack of training on business and entrepreneurial spirit. Future support and investments should:

- Support the professionalisation of dairy experts, by improving training and education. This requires investments in the entire education system.
- Improve skills and entrepreneurship using blended learning, combining online and face-to-face teaching methods with practice at company and farm level.
- Focus on improving quality and impact of the support, not on numbers of people trained.
- Create a Dairy Network of Excellence to share knowledge and to build upon, link and enhance existing and new knowledge.

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6 Get the development, trade and investment policies right

A successful dairy sector requires government policies that are geared towards creating an enabling environment. In many emerging economies and developing countries, the dairy sector is part of a politically sensitive arena in which potentially conflicting interests are at play. These may include issues concerning attaining self-sufficiency, the price of milk for consumers and producers, dealing with an informal chain, food safety, and fighting malnutrition. Dutch dairy development support projects have shown that, with support of the Netherlands' Embassies and in collaboration with local partners, Dutch actors can play a constructive and influential role in inclusive and comprehensive policy development, in addition to achieving concrete results on the ground. This requires the Embassies and both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture to play an active role. To further this, the action agenda proposes to:

- Support national governments in policy agenda setting. Dutch government support should focus on initiatives that can drive systemic change in the dairy sector.
- Invest in diplomatic and stakeholder relations to support an enabling policy environment, which can advance (Dutch) private-sector development.
- Develop an integral Dutch policy on dairy development support, using the experience and evidence from dairy development projects.



General principles

The paper concludes with some general principles for Dutch dairy development support. The biggest gains in developing dairy farming systems that contribute to sustainable and inclusive food systems are likely to be achieved by upgrading and improving low input-low output-low risk dairy farming systems. This can be done by developing, testing and supporting innovations. This should be done in an integrated manner, considering economic aspects, inclusivity aspects and environmental aspects.

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Interlinked transformation

The paper gives guidelines on how to achieve an interlinked transformation towards a sustainable and inclusive dairy sector. The six leverage points presented are not an either-or agenda. They have been drawn up to reinforce each other through concurrent action.

Developments on each of these leverage points are at different stages in each region and each country. Actions and support on the leverage points should be context-specific and tailor-made to each country or region.

To support sector transformation, it is essential to develop an integrated process. Such a process should be part of any larger dairy development programme, alongside more tangible deliverables and outcomes. It should include:

a Development of a common vision amongst relevant stakeholders, that provides guidance and stimulates innovations while maintaining an appropriate level of detail. This can be achieved through targeted multi-stakeholder processes with a large variety of actors and by forming focused coalitions.

b Building of networks among private sector, government agencies, NGOs and knowledge institutes. Networks form the basis for innovations, enlarges the scaling arena and promotes faster adoption. Each actor, whether in the private sector, government, NGOs or knowledge institutes, has a key role to play in securing a sustainable inclusive future for the dairy sector.

c Support for uptake by the sector through piloting, learning and experimenting in a number of fields including good animal husbandry practices, diversified market demand, infrastructure, business models, policies and regulations.

Engagement of the Dutch Diamond representatives with their counterparts in Africa and Asia will require carefully conducted multi-stakeholder processes, if sound benefits are to be achieved for all. The proposed Dairy Network of Excellence will be helpful for facilitating the knowledge sharing and applied action needed for this multi-stakeholder process to further co-develop effective dairy development strategies.

Based on the action agenda presented in this paper, new coalitions can be built to develop or strengthen existing and new dairy initiatives and programmes. This is supported by the new Netherlands Food Partnership, which was launched on World Food Day 2019. In 2020, the Food & Business Knowledge Platform and AgriProFocus will merge to form the Netherlands Food Partnership working organisation.

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