

Insights into the World Dairy Summit

Melt Loubser, president of the South African National Committee of the International Dairy Federation (SANCIDF) and board member of the IDF (elected in October last year), gave an overview of his experience of the World Dairy Summit, held in Paris in October, at the recent Milk SA general meeting. The summit was well attended with over 1 700 delegates from across the world.

Loubser said that the leading role South Africa plays in various committees and in positioning the country's dairy industry to align with the best in the world, is encouraging. He also discussed the wealth of information attendees such as Dr Mark Chimes and Christine Leighton brought back to South Africa.

The IDF consists of 17 standing committees which cover topics on sustainability, nutrition and health, as well as food safety and standards. Furthermore, over 1 200 international experts – from private institutions to academics from Oxford, Harvard and other prestigious universities across the globe, working on a voluntary basis – are involved. The IDF's members are from 64 countries, representing 74% of global dairy production.

Referring to the fact that dairy animals are regarded as major culprits from an environmental sustainability perspective, Loubser said this is an example of where expert knowledge is required to provide scientific proof that viewpoints are oversimplified and, in many cases, factually incorrect.

Sustainability and animal welfare had again mostly dominated discussions at the summit. He mentioned that the Paris Accord, which is an addition to the Rotterdam Agreement of 2017, had been signed in order to demonstrate to the world the effort that has gone into supporting environmental sustainability.

In his presentation at the summit, Loubser indicated that South Africa's efforts are mainly aimed at increasing productivity at farm level, with a strong focus on carbon sequestering – this tied in with a brilliant paper delivered by Dr Heinz Meissner in this regard. In addition, the South African organised industry deals with matters of collective interest in a structured manner, focussing on other aspects such as research and development, and international trade.

Loubser concluded by touching on the regulatory challenges which could be forced upon industries if they do not act as a collective.

Update on statutory measures

As a non-profit organisation, Milk SA has been designated by the minister of agriculture since 2005 to administer statutory measures (registration, records, returns and levies). These measures are published for four-yearly periods, and the applicant may request the minister to extend the measures for four years at a time.

The reason for the four years is for the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) and the minister to assess the extent to which the measures had been administered, implemented and enforced; the value the projects/objectives added to the industry and economy; and the level of support the measures still enjoy among industry role-players.

The current measures will lapse by the end of this year and the applicants (the MPO and/or Sampro) will most probably request the minister to extend the measures for another four years (2026 to 2029). The MPO and Sampro are the two member organisations of Milk SA.

For 2025, the levy for unprocessed or raw milk is 1,92c/kg (+4,35%), while the levy rates on imported products saw a similar increase. A maximum of 10% of the levy income is allowed to be spent on Milk SA's administration function.

The high degree of support from role-players who are subjected to the statutory measures is reassuring, as it enables the South African dairy industry to continue focussing on collective challenges.

New Year message from Milk SA CEO Nico Fouché

Uncertainty has always been part of this world. I remember what my uncle said in the 1970s about not wanting to bring children into this troubled world. But, if we only pay attention to the negatives, there would be no future for us.

Uncertainty and inconvenience will always be part of our lives, but it is also true that the extraordinary force of the human spirit carries us to achieve greatness. I am therefore grateful for every positive-minded person in the dairy industry who are not distracted by uncertainties but stays focussed on his/her mission.

I encounter people daily who are willing to walk the extra mile, and who regard the work they do as a vocation and not merely a job. We salute them!

A few interesting challenges and opportunities await Milk SA this year. We've elevated our communication efforts in order to keep all involved abreast of developments.

May everyone experience good health, peace and success.