

A stronger market for dairy products overall

A Milk SA report on the volume of unprocessed milk used in different dairy products from 2022 to 2024 has been completed and can be accessed [here](#).

Overall, the total cumulative use of unprocessed milk in dairy products increased by 3,74% in 2024 compared to 2023.

- Comparing 2024 to 2023, the main shifts in the use of unprocessed milk in dairy products occurred in skimmed milk powder (up by 25,99%) and fermented products (up by 12,29%).
- Whey powder manufacturing increased with 14,43% and butter with 16,87%.
- Long-life milk and cheese (excluding cottage and cream cheese) represent the bulk use of unprocessed milk, followed by fresh milk and fermented products.
- The manufacturing of whey powder and butter has grown consistently from 2022 to 2024. From 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 growth for whey powder was 12,33 and 14,43%, respectively, and for butter 7,24 and 16,87%, respectively.
- Steady volumes of unprocessed milk used in cheese (excluding cottage and cream cheese) during 2022, 2023 and 2024 are notably different from the more volatile volumes of unprocessed milk allocated towards the other dairy products.
- In most of the months during 2024 more whey powder and butter were manufactured compared to the same period in 2022 and 2023.

This information is made possible through the monthly returns submitted to Milk SA by industry role-players.

SA Dairy Championship and Qualité Awards

It is becoming increasingly challenging to do business in South Africa, especially as dairy and other industries need to provide food that meets the required quality and safety standards. The increasing number of products entered annually for the SA Dairy Championship shows the pride that our manufacturers take in their craftsmanship, their resilience and quest for excellence. A total of 1 110 dairy products from 77 manufacturers competed in 2025.

A panel of 103 expert judges representing 47 companies adjudicated the entries over three days. A total of 114 products received SA Champion awards as class winners, while 30 products were honoured with the prestigious Qualité mark, the only mark of excellence in the South African dairy industry.

A mascarpone, crafted by RFG Foods in Simondium for Woolworths, was crowned the 2025 Dairy Product of the Year at the awards function held at Eensgezind outside Durbanville on 8 April. Fair Cape Dairies won six Qualité awards, followed by Lactalis South Africa with four, Fairfield Dairy with three, and Dalewood Fromage, Fairview, Klein Rivier Cheese, Ladismith Cheese and Lancewood, each with two. Milk SA salutes them and all the other deserving winners!

Click [here](#) for the complete results.

IDF and the World Dairy Summit

Ten delegates from the organised dairy industry attended the World Dairy Summit (WDS) held in Paris, France during October 2024. They also participated in standing committees of the International Dairy Federation (IDF) that convened a few days prior to the summit. The agenda of the IDF and WDS links closely to the work of Milk SA and therefore forms an integral part of Milk SA's focus. Reports from these delegates are combined in an annual report, which is available [here](#).

The 2025 WDS will be held in Santiago, Chile in October. Melt Loubser, a Milk SA director, was elected as IDF board member last year.

Here are some take-outs from the 2024 WDS:

Milk production will be higher in countries that are less sensitive to environmental sustainability than others. Immense growth in dairy production is expected in India, where milk is produced from 400 million animals (dairy cows and buffalo), with a production of 2,8 litres per animal per day on average. – Melt Loubser

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the USA has approved a commercial methane-inhibiting feed additive for use in dairy cattle. The IDF has previously published a fact sheet on such additives and the sentiment on its application globally still seems uncertain. – Dr Colin Ohlhoff

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) work on plant-based and cellular foods aimed at protecting dairy terminology is ongoing. The focus is on developing technical definitions and criteria for plant-based and other plant-rich foods and ingredients, along with guidance on their labelling and permissible claims. – Thabang Rampa

Climate change has caused heightened concern in Europe, with issues such as chemical and bacteriological hazards in France potentially impacting dairy products and animal health. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was reported to be a significant threat in countries such as France and the US, while bluetongue affected some 500 herds in Denmark. – Chané Pretorius

Butter is the most favoured product in respect of sales growth, showing a strong performance across most international markets, with Chile leading sales growth with 9%. Milk powder sales growth is the fastest in Chile at 16%, whereas China reported a 11% decline. – Bertus van Heerden

An interesting topic was reducing the water fraction in milk on-farm by reverse osmosis. This will reduce the storage requirements on the farm as well as transport costs. This water is of a high quality and can be sold as bottled water to offset the costs. – Dr Mark Chimes

Given the growing body of evidence linking higher glutathione levels to improved cognitive function, regular consumption of dairy products could be a promising strategy for enhancing brain health and resilience against age-related cognitive decline. – Maretha Vermaak

During discussions with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) economists, it was indicated that more than half of unprocessed milk production growth is anticipated to come from India and Pakistan, which will jointly account for over 30% of world production in 2033. Noticeable production growth is also expected in China, while a slight decline is expected for the EU due to stagnating demand. – Dr Ndumiso Mazibuko

Research conducted in the US indicated that more than half of consumers believe processed foods can be part of a healthy diet. However, there is a lack of understanding about what processed foods are and their potential health implications. – Christine Leighton