

## Milk SA's animal health and welfare programme

Milk SA appointed Dr Mark Chimes as veterinary advisor to consult on dairy cattle health and welfare issues, and to represent Milk SA on various bodies within the field.

The most relevant acts and regulations pertaining to the South African dairy industry are as follows:

- *Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act 36 of 1947).*
- *Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act 35 of 1984).*
- *Medicines and Related Substances Act, 1965 (Act 101 of 1965).*
- *Animals Protection Act, 1962 (Act 71 of 1962).*
- *Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act, 1982 (Act 19 of 1982).*
- *Animal Identification Act, 2002 (Act 6 of 2002).*
- Regulations relating to hygiene requirements for milking sheds, the transport of milk and related matters: R961 of 23 November 2012 (*Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54, 1972 [Act 54 of 1972]*).
- SANS 1694 of 2018 – The Welfare of Dairy Cattle.
- SANS 1488 of 2014 – Humane Transport of Livestock by Road.
- SANS 1469 of 2014 – Humane Handling and Facilities for the Protection of Livestock at Shows, Auction Sales, Vending Sites and Livestock Pounds.

The work of Dr Chimes as programme manager is to ensure that the interests of the South African dairy industry are promoted through participation in various national and international forums, including:

- Milk SA is a full member of the **National Animal Health Forum (NAHF)**. A forum whereby veterinarians and animal production

groups can liaise with government departments regarding animal disease control matters. Through involvement with the NAHF, the brucellosis steering committee has been revived by Milk SA.

- Milk SA is a full member of the **Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee (LWCC)**, an organisation that aims to enhance and protect livestock welfare through collaboration, education, research, and advocacy, ensuring alignment with national legislation and international best practices.
- Milk SA is represented on and provides funding to the **South African National Committee of the International Dairy Federation (SANCIDF)** and is also represented on the International Dairy Federation (IDF) standing committee on animal health and welfare.
- Milk SA is represented on the federal council of the **South African Veterinary Association (SAVA)** to provide input and stay abreast of animal health and welfare issues.
- Milk SA is a member of the **Ruminant Veterinary Association of South Africa (RuVASA)** to provide input and stay abreast of animal health and welfare issues pertaining to milk-producing ruminants.
- As a member of the NAHF, Milk SA was instrumental in reviving the dormant **brucellosis and tuberculosis steering committee** and Dr Chimes holds the position of chairperson of the committee. This steering committee is focussed on controlling and eventually eradicating brucellosis and tuberculosis.
- Milk SA was the exclusive driving force to get the **South African Bureau of Standards (SABS)** to revise SANS 1694 (welfare of dairy cattle) and SANS 1488 (transport of livestock by road) standards. An SABS working group was established and revisions commenced in early 2025.



Dr Mark Chimes, programme manager: animal health and welfare.

- Milk SA is actively involved in the National Department of Agriculture's **foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) technical and trade joint operations committee** to assist and advise on the control of the FMD outbreak in South Africa.
- Milk SA is engaging in a joint research venture with Stellenbosch University to ascertain levels of calf welfare on dairy farms and compliance with statutory welfare standards.
- Other: Milk SA's veterinary advisor was frequently engaged in lecturing at universities and veterinary conferences, presenting webinars for dairy producers, publishing articles in the veterinary and lay press, and conducting media interviews and farmers' day talks. This programme has been instrumental in defining problem areas in dairy animal health and welfare that require attention or research.



*Gerhard Venter, project manager: skills and knowledge development, secondary dairy industry sector.*

## Enhancing industry competitiveness

Milk SA's Secondary Sector Skills Project achieved significant milestones in 2024, says Gerhard Venter, project manager. Chief among them were:

- The milk reception operator qualification was registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as a stand-alone qualification.
- The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) considered recommendations regarding the dairy laboratory analyst qualification submission and communicated similar recommendations to the project, which demanded a revision of the submission format by FoodBev Manufacturing SETA.
- The External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA) conducted in March 2024 was discussed in-depth after an audit by QCTO. Many new decisions were taken to improve on this, with the aid of the dairy industry, as well as a revision for the next EISA held in March this year.
- A decision was taken to upgrade the contents of the dairyman qualifications by inserting relevant portions featuring new technology, as observed by the project manager who also conducts on-site training (not funded by Milk SA, but through grants from FoodBev Manufacturing SETA).
- Three additional skills development providers (apart from the singular enterprise, active for a number of years) were accredited and their clients supplied with Milk SA learning materials.

## Industry showing more signs of life

Industry has seen a decrease in raw milk production for the fourth consecutive year since 2020, while retail trade sales and prices of dairy and other commodities also declined. In 2024, the situation looked slightly better with raw milk production having increased by 3,5% compared to 2023, and improved retail trade trends recorded by NielsenIQ. However, economic growth remains weak, with consumer debt a growing cause for concern.

For the first time since 2014, South Africa was once again a net exporter of dairy products, and the figures indicated a continued trend in 2024. Cheese exports also exceeded imports for 2023 and 2024, for the first time since 2002.

## Challenges for new producers worldwide

Bertus van Heerden, Milk SA project manager for economies and markets, attended the World Dairy Summit in Paris, France in October 2024. Among other things, he reported on the challenges that especially new producers are facing.

Most farming enterprises are high on the risk scale due to climate exposure and the relative uncontrolled effect thereof. In dairy farming, the composition of the product and the 24 hours per day, 365 days per year nature of the business exacerbate the exposure to pressure and risk.

Mental health concerns are gaining in recognition and feature among the topics most discussed at farming association and community meetings.

In addition, societies do not always heed the pressure producers are under and a lack of support from governments/communities leaves producers feeling vulnerable. In 2023, 5,8% of dairy producers in the United Kingdom left the industry.

If the income is not sufficient, people will not stay in farming. In the European Union, 46% of producers fall into the average income category. The risk-reward balance seems off kilter when compared to other industries.



*Bertus van Heerden, Milk SA project manager: economies and markets.*