

The dairy matrix matters

The Consumer Education Project of Milk SA promotes the health and nutritional benefits of dairy to both public and health professionals.

Dairy provides essential nutrients that help South Africans meet their daily dietary reference intakes. Regular dairy consumption has also been shown to reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Importantly, the role of dairy in health extends beyond the nutrients it contains. This is explained by the dairy matrix effect – the combined action of nutrients and other components within the physical and chemical structure of dairy products, and how this interaction influences health outcomes.

Because matters of this nature require expert, independent input across disciplines, a technical advisory committee was established. The committee is made up primarily of nutrition specialists from leading South African academic institutions:

- Prof Renée Blaauw – PhD Nutrition, Stellenbosch University.
- Nicki de Villiers – M Dietetics (University of Pretoria [UP]); Postgrad Dipl Dietetics (UP); Sport Nutrition Diploma (International Olympic Committee).
- Dr Tushcka Reynders – B Dietetics (HPCSA); PhD Biochemistry.
- Prof Corinna Walsh – PhD Dietetics, University of the Free State.
- Prof Friede Wenhold – PhD Nutrition; registered dietitian (SA).
- Dr Zelda White – PhD Nutrition.
- Dr Mariaan Wicks – PhD Nutrition.

Looking ahead to 2026, general consumer communication will continue to focus on living standard measure (LSM) 6-8, with significant reach into LSM 8-10 and LSM 4-5.

Dairy product retail performance up to June 2025

According to the Competition Commission's *Cost of Living Report* (4 September 2025), electricity prices have risen by 68% and water by 50% over the past five years, well above the general inflation rate which increased by 28%.

Low-income households now spend more than 40% of their income on essentials such as food and basic services, making rising costs a significant burden. Economic growth remains subdued, with GDP expanding by only 0,8% in 2024 and projected at around 1,5% for 2025. Retail data from NielsenIQ up to June 2025 must therefore be assessed within this challenging market context. Stats SA further reports that annual food and non-alcoholic beverage inflation reached a 15-month high of 5,1% in June 2025.

Against this backdrop, *Table 1* shows that only one category, namely flavoured milk, outperformed the 5,1% annual benchmark. However, this growth was achieved at the expense of price and represents only a small share of the overall dairy product portfolio. Of greater concern is the weak performance of fresh milk, both in sales volumes and pricing, underscoring the price sensitivity across dairy products in general.

Table 1: Changes in retail sales quantities from July 2023 to June 2025; and changes in the retail prices from June 2024 to June 2025.

	Change in retail sales quantities %	Change in retail prices %
Fresh milk	-0,7	-2,4
Long-life (UHT) milk	5,7	-1,3
Flavoured milk	-0,8	7,9
Yoghurt	3,5	2,7
Maas	7,3	-0,5
Pre-packed cheese	3,8	3,2
Cream cheese	3,9	3,3
Cream	5,1	0,9

Request for action on foot-and-mouth disease

Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen has announced the establishment of an industry-government task team on foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). It was requested that the task team be composed primarily of veterinarians and FMD virologists/experts.

Milk SA is proud to announce that three members of the Milk SA FMD work group – Drs Anthony Davis, Jacqui Marais and Mark Chimes – have been appointed to the task team.

A request for an action document will be submitted to the ministerial task team for consideration shortly. This document will highlight the urgent priorities of the dairy industry, including:

- Centralised disease control protocols.
- Comprehensive vaccination programmes.
- Approval of private laboratories for FMD testing.

Milk SA remains committed to keeping the industry informed on developments relating to this critical issue.