



## **The Kenyan dairy sector learning tour DAY 3**

*In March 2018, CELEP has organised a learning tour on small-scale dairying in Kenya for a delegation from three West African countries – Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – in collaboration with Oxfam. CELEP has already been active on this topic and even organised a roundtable session in the European Parliament on pastoralism and dairying during the 2017 CELEP annual meeting in Brussels. European Union (EU) policies affect dairying in both Eastern and West Africa directly (through development aid) and indirectly (through domestic agricultural and trade policies). Dairying is therefore an important entry point to advocate with the EU for recognition of pastoralism. This is also the trajectory through which the International Land Coalition (ILC) Rangelands Initiative defines key milestone in the Participatory Rangelands Management project, which is funded by the European Commission and seeks to improve pastoralists' nutrition. The one week learning tour in Kenya is being facilitated by RECONCILE, the CELEP regional focal point in Eastern Africa and the European CELEP members DITSL (German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture) and SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation). The CELEP core-group and the European focal point in Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF)-Belgium are providing input and assuring the overall coordination of the tour. Below is a summary of the third day of the visit.*

The third day of the learning visit brought the group to Nakuru, where they met with a local dairy farmer. He shared his story with the group, explaining that, before 2009, he had only two local cows that produced 10 litres of milk per day. Because of their limited production capacity, he decided to sell them so that he could buy better-performing cows from exotic breeds. He sold his two local cows for 200 USD and added money to buy three cows from exotic breeds, each one at 480 USD. He chose the Friesian breed because of its high potential for milk production. He was committed to continuously learning more about how to optimize conditions for his cows and he puts these ideas into practice. He had the highest milk production in his area and was often asked by other farmers to share his knowledge. He sells his milk to a retailer at 0.30–0.32 USD per litre. The retailer supplies milk to families located in Nakuru County. He now has a substantial income from his business. However, he still faces many challenges and receives little government support. He would like the government to support him and his group by reducing the taxes on livestock feed. He also needs improved access to clean water for his cows.



**Learning group discussing with dairy farmers in Meru (Photo: Azara Remalia Nfon Dibie)**



**Exotic Friesian dairy cows in village near Meru** (Photo: Azara Remalia Nfon Dibie)

On the use of exotic breeds, it should be noted that in this particular case, that the dairy farmer visited by the delegation, has been able to support exotic breeds because he has really invested in supporting them. For instance, he shifted from growing food crops to growing more fodder crops and he was one of the first to make silage in his area, etc. Therefore, exotic breeds seem to not always be the better choice because the performance of the animal depends on the constraints in the farming system. So, for many dairy farmers mixed breed cows are still a better choice. Government policies have since long been promoting artificial insemination as the best way to improve milk productivity, subsidising farmers on a massive scale to start using exotic breeds. Today, it seems in fact that local breeds are becoming scarce.

After visiting the local dairy farmer, the group visited the Department of Dairy and Food Science and Technology at Egerton University. Mr Kutto Vitalis guided the group through the various steps of milk processing, transforming and conditioning. At the campus, raw milk is transformed into yoghurt or cheese and retailed through the shops in the university. In this department, they have all the necessary equipment to produce high-quality dairy products and are able to monitor the characteristics of milk from simple organoleptic tests (taste, sight, smell) to complex laboratory analysis to identify specific microbes. The capacity of the dairy-processing plant is 2000 litres a day. Over 1600 yoghurt packs are produced daily and are sold in different places on the University campus and in the region. The learning group then visited the Tatton Agricultural Park (TAP), which has an educational purpose but also produces milk for students' consumption. Participants visited all the components of the farm, including the stables, the milking parlour, etc.

The learning group also met with the ROSALAMA self-help group, which was registered in 2017 and is made up of different stakeholder groups (producers, transporters, retailers etc.) who are active in the small-scale milk value chain. This is a kind of platform where the dairy stakeholders come together and try to overcome the challenges they are facing. In addition, the platform aims to facilitate commercial relationships between the various dairy actors of the value chain in the County. They meet twice a month to "feed" their action plan and to monitor progress toward their objective, which is to open their own dairy-processing plant.

Throughout Day 3, the West African delegation noticed many similarities in the challenges faced in Kenya and in their part of the continent. One of those includes drought. Dry periods in the area can last over four consecutive months, affecting water and pasture for the cattle. Farmers try to overcome this by producing silage, but this is not enough. Another common challenge is related to the milk price, which the producers regard as too low. Finally, the seasonality in production is also an important factor, leading to high variation in the amount of milk produced and collected. During the rainy season when milk is abundant, the retailers

do not go to all the concessions to collect their milk. To overcome these challenges, the farmers gather in a group or cooperative, thus facilitating access to markets in urban areas.

At the same time, it seems that the economic model followed by many donors is that farmers process the milk themselves, instead of selling it to processing units. The viability of this model, however, is questioned since this means that farmers would have to compete with big processing factories.