

Ensuring Farmer Resilience

Addressing society's most complex issues requires a systems-based approach that maximizes partnerships and innovation. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a framework for tackling these challenges by fostering cross-sector collaboration and guiding policy decisions. The dairy sector is helping catalyze progress towards achieving the SDGs, improving quality of life, reducing global disparities, and ensuring a sustainable future for all.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



The Situation

- The average age of farmers worldwide is nearly 60, with fewer young people pursuing agriculture as a career. As this generation retires, the future of farming – and with it, global food security – is at risk.
- According to data from the World Bank, young farmers face significant barriers to entry and long-term viability in the sector, including low and unpredictable income, limited access to land, complex administrative processes, and pressure from global market competition. Many aspiring farmers also cite the need for larger landholdings, improved access to modern technology and equipment, and better living conditions to sustain their livelihoods.¹
- Farmer resilience is more than just generational renewal. Farmers are also adapting to climate change, economic volatility, and shifting global political forces that influence agricultural markets. Extreme weather events, water scarcity and soil degradation threaten productivity, making it essential to equip farmers with climate-smart agriculture techniques, financial risk management tools, and supportive policy frameworks.
- Meanwhile, more than 700 million people worldwide face hunger and 2.8 billion cannot afford a healthy diet.² As the global population continues to grow, investing in the resilience of farmers – especially the next generation – is essential to ensuring a sustainable, nutritious and secure food supply for all.

The Path Forward

Empowering farmers to succeed while enabling food system transformation can help build farmer resilience while sustainably feeding our growing world. Research shows agricultural transformation, particularly in the dairy sector, can drive economic development, reduce poverty, improve livelihoods, and support broader social development.^{3,4,5,6}



How Dairy Can Help

- **Enhances food security:** Meeting daily nutrition needs with a plants-only diet would cost two times as much as one that includes animal-source foods. Dairy can help make healthy diets accessible by providing a significant portion of nutrient requirements at a lower cost, including more than one quarter of daily protein requirements and more than half of daily vitamin D and calcium requirements.^{5,6} Improving dairy production also results in decreased retail prices relative to average wages, making high-quality dairy products accessible to more people.^{7,8}
- **Enriches farmer livelihood:** The dairy sector creates jobs on farms and in milk production facilities. Development of the dairy sector results in better living conditions for dairy farmers. Dairy farmers also receive a steady income compared to seasonal crop farming, which improves farmers' economic resiliency and security.⁸
- **Increases government revenues:** Governments in high dairy producing countries can potentially generate between 50 to 90 times more tax revenue than low milk yielding countries, allowing them to provide the public goods and services that will be necessary to achieve the SDGs.^{8,9}

Partnering with Dairy

- **Empower farmers to adapt to climate change and economic volatility:** Governments and industry leaders must invest in climate-smart livestock agriculture, including improved feed efficiency, regenerative grazing systems, advanced manure management, and methane reduction technologies. Adoption of precision dairy farming – such as automated milking systems, smart feed management, and genetic advancements for animal health and productivity – can enhance efficiency while reducing emissions. Additionally, financial tools, such as index-based livestock insurance, carbon credit programs, and incentives for methane mitigation, can help dairy farmers manage climate-related losses and benefit from sustainability initiatives.⁸
- **Expand access to technology, finance, and policy support:** Investments in dairy-specific innovations, including methane-reducing feed additives, advanced breeding programs, and digital herd management systems, can make operations more sustainable and profitable. Improving rural infrastructure, such as broadband access and cold chain logistics, enhances market access for dairy products. Financial mechanisms such as low-interest loans for herd expansion, cooperative funding models, and investment in sustainable dairy processing facilities supports new farmers in overcoming financial barriers. Policy reforms that simplify dairy farm succession planning, improve land tenure security, and provide carefully targeted financial assistance for climate-smart livestock practices helps strengthen the next generation of dairy producers.^{2,10,11}
- **Enhance cross-sector collaboration:** Collaboration between governments, financial institutions, and industry stakeholders is key to driving transformational change in the dairy sector. Proven approaches, such as dairy farmer cooperatives, knowledge-sharing networks, and public-private partnerships, successfully improve farm resilience, productivity, and profitability. Expanding these models – while ensuring farmers have a voice in shaping policies – is critical to securing the future of sustainable milk production. Strengthening global alliances that link dairy

sustainability efforts to climate and food security goals, including engagement with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and global methane reduction initiatives, will enhance the sector's role in long-term solutions.⁸

Impact Story

The Dairy Nourishes Africa (DNA) Initiative

OVERVIEW

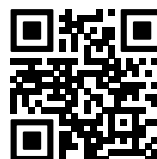
Launched in 2020, the Dairy Nourishes Africa (DNA) Initiative is a public-private partnership in East Africa that harnesses the collective strength of local stakeholders and the global dairy sector to create more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable food systems.

FOUNDING PARTNERS

Global Dairy Platform
Land O'Lakes Venture37
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KEY OUTCOMES

- Reduced dairy farming emissions through enhanced productivity and lower methane emissions per cow and per liter of milk
- Improved access to milk aggregation, processing, and marketing systems
- Provided cattle vaccines, forage, feed, and genetics support
- Empowered women dairy farmers with climate-smart operations



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