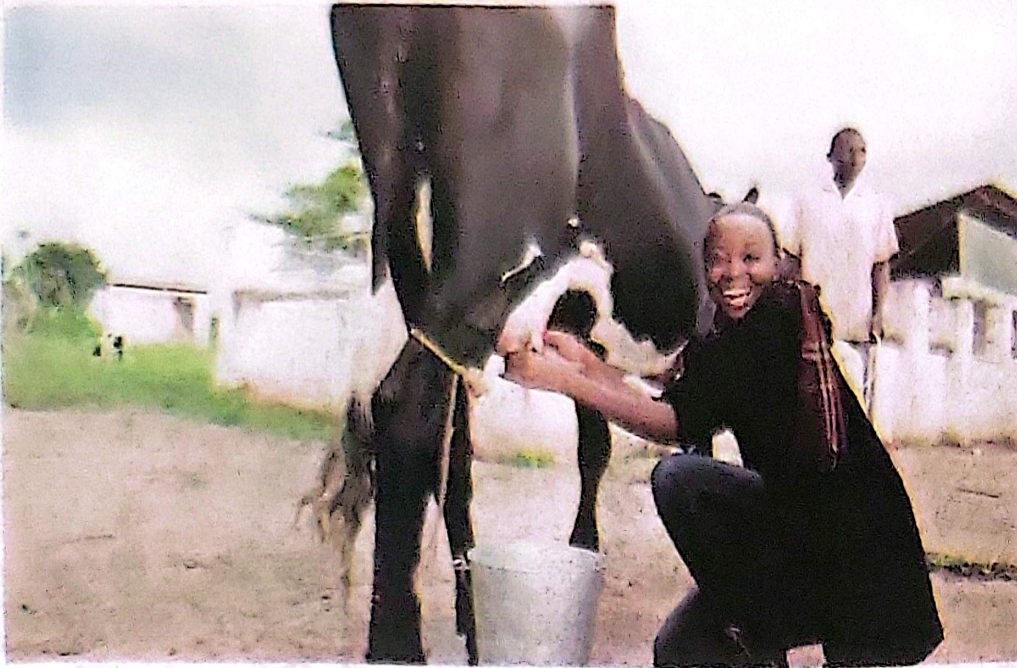


# How you can earn more money from milk



A Miss Uganda contestant takes to the teats of a dairy cow to milk. FILE PHOTO

Dairy experts opine that farmers can make more money from milk if they observe proper practices such as handling, storage and marketing, writes **Desire Mbabaali**

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THE COST OF A LITRE OF MILK IN MBALE

**D**airy production is one field full of potential for dairy farmers.

However, it has not been explored to the fullest by both farmers who are already in the business and the consumers of dairy products. We therefore explore the best practices in dairy production that can help you earn more from your produce.

## Beginning the process

It is important to note that the quality of milk starts from before the milk is got. "It starts from a healthy animal. The udder should be healthy but also, milking the animal should be healthy," cautions Moses Mugarura, a dairy farmer.

He explains that the udder should be cleaned before the milking and each teat thoroughly checked for mastitis. "The testing is done

using a milking cup and the milk should be free of any clots, blood, or other impurities," he adds. The milking environment should also be clean since milk is very sensitive to any impurities, Mugarura says. "Smells, perfumes, smoke, dust, and dung can easily contaminate the milk. Since it is easily adulterated, the person milking should also be clean as well as the equipment used during the milking," he adds.

Milking should also be done quickly, that is, rapid milking should be done so the milk does not get adulterated. It is then passed through a filtration process after which, it is safe to use or store.

## Keeping milk safe

Dr Brian Nicholas Arinaitwe, former East African Dairy Development cluster coordinator Masaba

region says after milking, the milk temperature should be 36°C - almost the body temperature of the cow. "To keep this milk from going bad, the temperature must either be increased or reduced to prevent bad bacteria from multiplying," he notes. For producers of small quantities, boiling the milk may be the quickest option. However for producers of large quantities, inserting the milking can in cold water to lower the temperatures to about 20°C or 15°C is one option, or better still refrigerating, Dr Arinaitwe adds.

Mugarura strongly advises farmers against storing their milk in plastic containers or jerry cans. "They tend to accumulate impurities and are hard to clean. The best alternative is a stainless milking can," he adds. Joseph Masaba, a dairy expert at NaSARRI gives the

option of value addition especially to farmers who cannot easily access the market or those producing in large quantities. "This minimises loss of milk since it is very perishable. Making products such as yoghurt, cheese, ghee and ice cream among others can save farmers the losses," Masaba explains.

## Marketing

The market for milk largely depends on one's location. If you are located in a strategic place, market for milk is available," he adds. "In Mbale for example, a litre of milk is Shs1,000," Masaba says, adding that group marketing is also another direction to look. "In Ngora, for example, we encouraged farmers who produce five to six litres to collect them as a group and sell in large quantities. A marketing corporation was created and a milk processing unit has been established for small scale farmers," he notes. In the same spirit, one can join cooperatives that have stable prices so they are sure of their income, Dr Arinaitwe adds.

## Best practices

Dr Arinaitwe notes that most farmers do not keep books of records so they do not get to know where and when they are making losses or profit.

"It is important that you track your investments and earnings, even for a small scale farmer," he says.

"Reducing the cost of production is another way to make more money. The biggest production expenses in dairy farming are feeding and treating," Dr Arinaitwe says. The farmer can do much in preventing diseases, so they do not spend a lot of money in treatment. Keeping hygiene and sanitation on the farm is one way to do it.

## Formalin not good

He further discourages the use of preservatives such as formalin to prolong the shelf life of milk.

"Such preservative are not recommended and reduce the quality and health of the milk. However, it is normally not the farmers but the milk outlets and milk transporters that add these," he says. Some people use cream separators to remove fat from the milk to prolong its life, which he says reduces the value for milk.