the use of ineffective mixtures again, reaching nearly five nearly 39 percent of the coun-

Dairy industry targets bigger markets as production surges

MARUE P. NATAKWA

Uganda's dairy sector is experiencing a steady growth, with milk production increasing from 3.8 billion litres annually at the start of the NDP3 to 5.4 billion litres as NDP4.

According to Mr. Samson Akankiza, Commissioner, Department of Dairy Development and Production, this expansion is being driven by government interventions in breeding, animal nutrition, disease control, and market access.

As part of the government's Rationalization of Agencies for Managing Expenditure and Efficiency of services (RAPEX) policy, the department, which now falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), was formerly the Dairy Development Authority. While the restructuring cost some staff their jobs (non-scientist staff), officials say the department has retained its technical experts and continues to execute its original mandate.

"The Dairy Development Authority was established by the Dairy Industry Act 1998 and was actualized in 2000 through the formation of the authority whose mandate was to regulate and develop the dairy industry in the country," says Mr. Akankiza.

"Now when RAPEX happened, one of the guidelines from His Excellency, the President was to ensure that the authorities that had been executing mandates did not loss their function and technical people. Our mandate as the Department of Dairy

Development and Production remains to develop and regulate the dairy industry. The activities we do to actualize the mandate are still ongoing. We are charged with increasing domestic consumption, ensuring nutrition for our population, quality maintenance, value addition and market access," explains the commissioner.

"So we do inspection, licensing of any operator in the sector, enforcement if there are any non-conformities, we also support the processors in value addition and ensure the labs are doing the right testing - we have a national analytical laboratory where all these samples are checked for fitness for consumption," Mr Ankiza adds.

Growing Capacity, Exports

Milk production has grown steadily over the past five years, supported by improved animal feeding practices, right from breeding, nutrition, vaccination, quality of dairy products and attention to farmers.

Processing capacity has also expanded.

Mr. Akankiza notes, "Uganda had 123 dairy processing facilities a few years ago, but the number now stands at 166, with installed capacity rising from 2.3 million litres to 5.4 million litres per day. Subsequently, we have seen growth in our value addition capacity with emphasis on improving shelf life and marketability."

The export market trends for dairy shows a significant growth as dairy exports have more than doubled.

"We used to export dairy products to a tune of $106 million, we are currently at $265 milllion. With new access to the Algerian market, that is expected to take in dairy products worth over $500 million, the dairy sector anticipates further growth," Mr Akankiza says.

"Furthermore negotiations are also ongoing with Nigeria and the UAE, which could diversify Uganda's traditional reliance on Kenya as the main export destination. "In fact, we need to increase our milk production,"he adds.