

# Strengthening the EU-Africa relationship through market driven sustainable development



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**T**he European Dairy sector has a key role to play with regards to Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda, supporting food security, poverty alleviation or the improvement of our dairy chains sustainability. The combination of increased trade, local cooperation and investments can and should contribute to the inclusive and sustainable development of Africa's agri-food sector and rural economy. The Dairy sector advocates for partnerships, addressing the challenge of climate change and the need to create skilled jobs for the young population joining the work force.

With the publication of its final report, an agri-food and rural agenda for the new 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs' in March 2019, EU Commission's Task Force for Rural Africa gives guidance to ensure a more sustainable agriculture, agri-food economy and rural development on the African continent.

## Meeting the demand for dairy products

Today, Africa faces an ever-growing demand for dairy products. Over half of the global population growth between now and 2050 is expected to occur in Africa. The UN World Population Prospects projects a 2.5 billion population in 2050. This trend has already started and shows an impressive economic development, fuelled by a young population joining the work force with increasing living standards.

Due to challenging climate and environmental conditions as well as infrastructural landscape, most African countries have difficulties accessing productive land and adequate water supplies. Livestock farmers lack feed and yields and local companies must deal with substantial milk deficits. Under-nutrition is a problem in many developing countries, and they may lack self-sufficiency in the production of certain foodstuffs. Dairy is an affordable, easy digestible source of many important proteins,

vitamins and minerals such as calcium. But in most countries of the African continent, the growing demand for such high-quality nutritious food cannot be met by the national dairy industry alone. This is, and will be for the foreseeable future, the case for dairy products.

African imports of European dairy commodities encourage the local production of consumer goods, encouraging the long-term developments of the local dairy sector. The creation of functioning value chains will be essential for skilled job creation and for the overall improvement of the African agri-food sector.

## Working with the (full) food chain

The African market and its potential are subject to global markets, it is therefore important to realise that EU – African trade flows can easily be replaced with exports from global competitors. This is for sure one of the strong incentives for European dairies to commit to a sustainable dairy cooperation and fully engage

in the development of the overall dairy potential of African countries. Through partnership projects launched by European dairy companies together with NGOs and local associations, our dairy sector is ambitious about ensuring the positive development and functioning of the African dairy industry, for the benefits of all. A number of European dairies have been very instrumental to support initiatives increasing local milk production and milk processing.

### **Our European dairy approach: responsible business practices**

The European Dairy industry operates in a responsible way by minimising the risk of creating distortions in agricultural markets. The political framework in Europe has evolved in the very same direction: removal of export subsidies, decoupling of support for farmers and very restricted market measures, basically limited to times of crisis.

### **High quality, affordable nutritious products**

In a time where the African Dairy sector is still operating under its future potential, we need to highlight the current nutrition and dietary needs of the population. UN Sustainable Development Goals state hunger and poverty eradication as their number 2 goal. In parallel, FAO's definition of sustainable diets reflects the position of the European Dairy sector in Africa: providing affordable and nutritionally adequate food, including economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

Our European Dairy industry can therefore make a difference by contributing to a responsible and sustainable food production in Africa. It is essential to acknowledge the various factors that hinder competitiveness like the limited finance for investments in processing, storage or cooling and meeting sanitary – phytosanitary standards. Together with our African partners, the European Dairy sector can modernise the Dairy industry in most, if not all 54 countries on the African continent that can thereby increase its performance. The creation of functioning value chains will be essential for job creation and for the overall improvement of the African agri-food sector.