Trade Focus



Dairy Trade and the United Arab Emirates

October 2026

The EU Dairy Sector and EDA

The European Dairy Association (EDA) is the recognized voice and trade association of the European milk processing industry, representing both cooperative and private-owned dairies, SMEs, and global leaders across the European Union.

EU dairy companies' diversified export portfolio ensures that consumers in all regions of the world can be supplied with our unique and healthy European dairy products. With more than 45,000 jobs directly linked to these exports, the dairy sector is also a key contributor to local communities, supporting growth and employment directly and indirectly through dairy production and exports.

EU dairy exports to the UAE are worth **€451 million** annually, up 9% since 2023 and **13% of all EU agri-food exports** to the country (€3.5 billion). Overall, the EU is the UAE's second-largest trading partner, but trade relations are not yet covered by a free trade agreement.
Negotiations on an EU–UAE Free Trade Agreement were agreed at presidential level in April 2025 and formally launched in Dubai on **28 May 2025**. After seven negotiating rounds, all chapters have been addressed, with progress on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and both sides have exchanged market access requests for goods. Negotiations are ongoing, with the UAE aiming to conclude the agreement in 2026.

> The European Dairy Association (EDA) welcomes the progress in the EU–UAE free trade negotiations and calls for an ambitious outcome for dairy. An agreement that removes tariffs, simplifies market access procedures and protects European geographical indications would open new opportunities for EU dairy in one of the Gulf region's most promising markets.

A future EU–UAE Free Trade Agreement can be beneficial for both economies. From a dairy perspective, the UAE has a small domestic dairy sector with a self-sufficiency rate of only 13%, so imports play a key role. At the same time, the UAE is a hub for the Gulf: its dairy re-exports go mainly to Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The EU already supplies mainly cheese, condensed milk, milk powders and butter, from the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy and Ireland. But this is where opportunities lie. EDA is pushing for ambitious market access for dairy and strong protection of European geographical indications, which would strengthen the well-deserved excellence reputation of all our European premium dairy products in the UAE.

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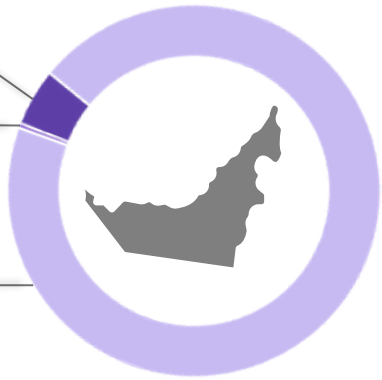
The Dairy sector in UAE and the EU

UAE

604.855 camels

50.000 cows

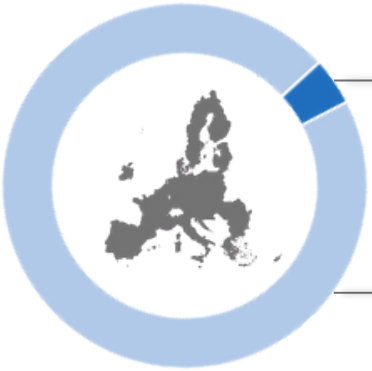
11.5 m inhabitants



EU

19.2 m cows

440 m inhabitants



Milk yield

Per cow, in 2025

EU: 8 tonnes

UAE: 11 tonnes

Dairy farms

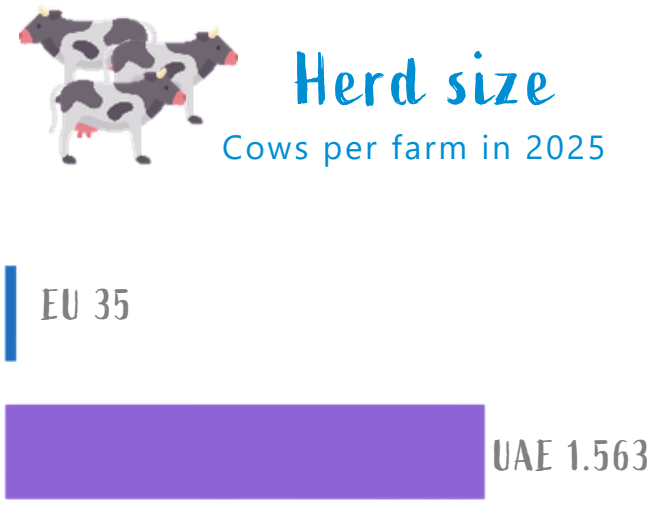
Number in 2025

EU: 550.000

UAE: 32

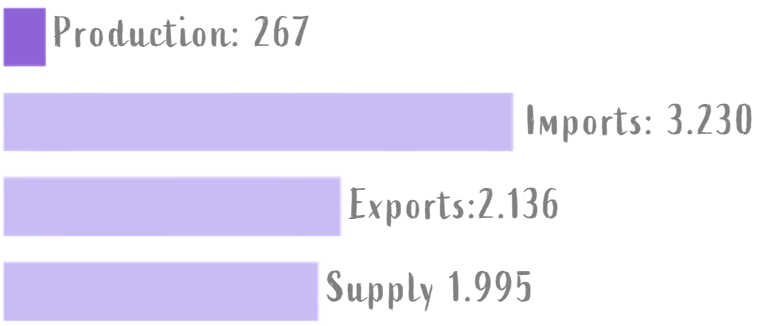
Herd size

Cows per farm in 2025



UAE Milk balance

1,000 tonnes, 2024



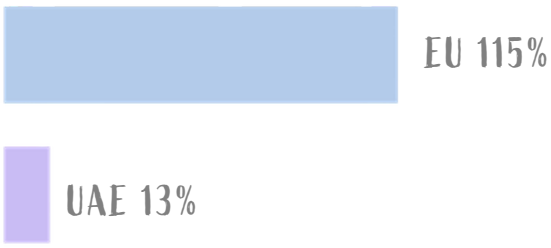
Sources: EDA Surveys, FAOSATA, Comtrade, WTO, European Commission OECD Icons © Noun Project Inc.

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The Dairy sector in UAE and the EU

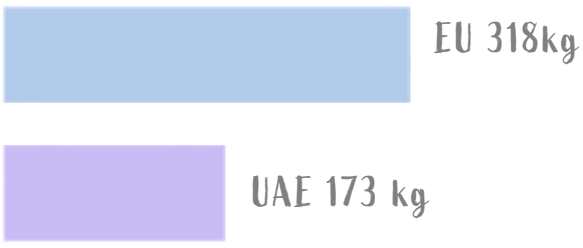
Self-suffiency in milk

2025



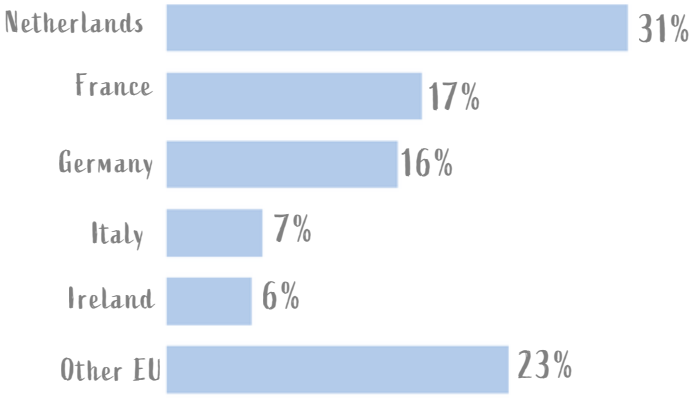
Consumption per capita per year

In 2025 (milk equivalent)



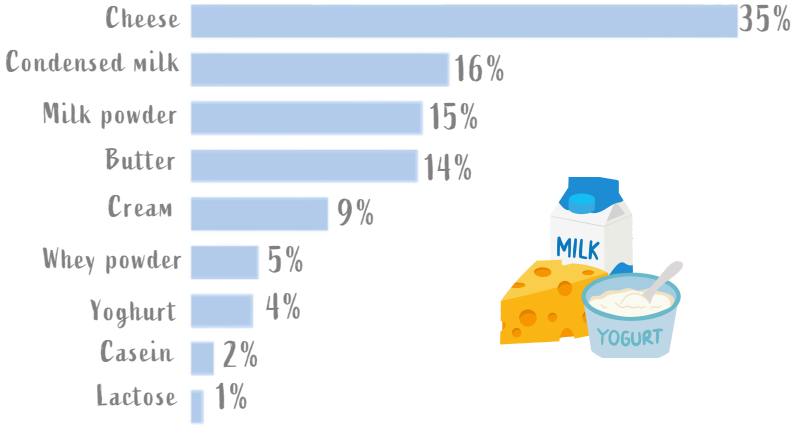
EU suppliers

Share of dairy export value, 2025

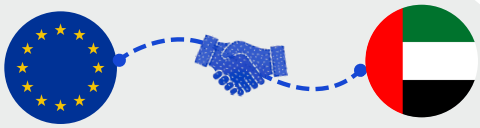


What the EU exports to the UAE

Share of dairy export value, 2025



Key insights



- **13% self-sufficiency:** The UAE covers only a small part of its dairy demand itself and depends on imports.
- **€451 million:** EU dairy exports to the UAE in 2025, up 9% since 2023 and 13% of all EU agri-food exports to the country. Cheese is the leading product with 35% of export value.
- **Gulf hub:** About two thirds of the milk imported into the UAE is re-exported. 79% of the UAE's dairy exports reported by importing countries go to Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.
- **Three suppliers**: The Netherlands, France and Germany deliver 64% of EU dairy export volume to the UAE.
- **Competition rising:** Russia and its partners in the Eurasian Economic Union have enjoyed preferential access to the UAE since 6 October 2026, while the EU is still negotiating.

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