

Zambia Dairy Transformation Programme

JULY 2020 NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the latest edition of our monthly newsletter, which summarises recent activities carried out under the Zambia Dairy Transformation Programme (ZDTP).

Left: Mrs. Ruth Mwabanjilo, right, with her daughter, Mirriam, who helps run the family's mixed farm in Katete area of Kwanshama. Mirriam is responsible for supervising the farm workers and ensuring the farm is efficiently run. Techniques she's been using include: the 'Sunlight' Rapid Mastitis Test, making concentrates on farm and using locally available feed such as grass from a nearby stream and leaves from the 'kapeta nsofu' tree.

Mrs. Mwabanjilo, with the support of Mirriam and her sister Chiseche, has been an active participant of the ZDTP's Real-Time Monitoring (RTM) scheme since October 2017. Her daughters are members of the newly formed Kwanshama Youth Group, which has asked the ZDTP for technical assistance to improve members' knowledge, skills and application of profitable dairy farming techniques.

Farmers recruit younger family members to help with farm business management

As part of our Real-Time Monitoring (RTM) initiative, information on a farm's financial and production performance is collected from participating farmers on a monthly basis.

We were extremely pleased to see levels of adoption increase significantly last year. For example, between May 2019 and July 2019, levels of adoption almost doubled from 49 to 82 farming households. This was 20 months after the start of the scheme in October 2017.

RTM farmers complete a simple two page form every month to track things like feed costs and milk production. This information is collated and fed back to farmers through quarterly reports, which are explained to farmers by their local ZDTP extension officer. The aim is to help farmers better understand key aspects of their dairy businesses such as income, expenditure, herd structure, milk production and ultimately profit, cash flow and cost of production.

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ZDTP welcomes Mr. Gilbert Mweemba

We are delighted to welcome Mr. Gilbert Mweemba as our new Extension Officer for Chibombo and Liteta. In welcoming Mr. Mweemba, we would also like to acknowledge the work of our outgoing EO for the districts – Ms. Beatrice Mwilima. Mr. Mweemba started working with Ms. Mwilima in 2018 and he and his wife Mary showed enthusiasm from day one. As a result, their farm was chosen as one of the programme's 10 'Focus Farms', which are used to demonstrate good practices to other farmers. Mr. Mweemba will continue to be a Focus Farmer while carrying out his EO duties.

Survey results indicate pleasing adoption rates

Preliminary analysis of data from our Year Four Annual Benchmarking Survey (ABS) showed that, as of April 2020, 71 per cent of households across the six cooperatives the ZDTP is working with had implemented one or more of the low cost practices being promoted by the programme. The majority of these households reported to have adopted nutrition-related practices, such as making silage or concentrates from crops grown on the farm or using structures to reduce feed wastage, or milk quality related practices, such as using Sunlight dishwashing liquid as a Rapid Mastitis Test (RMT). We are pleased with this level of adoption and the effects seen on farm performance, such as reduced cost of production, improved profits and reduced cases of mastitis. We look forward to sharing more good news once the Year Four ABS report has been finalised.

Minister endorses ZDTP's simple interventions during field visit

Simple solutions, such as silage and the 'Sunlight' Rapid Mastitis Test, being promoted by the ZDTP to improve the quantity and quality of milk for sale in Zambia have been endorsed by the country's Minister for Fisheries and Livestock. Professor Nkandu Luo shared her feedback following visits to a Milk Collection Centre (MCC) in Liteta and two dairy farms on August 21, 2020. Professor Luo was joined by Dr. Benson Mwenya, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MFL), as well as Dr. Chibwe Kaoma (MFL's Director of Livestock Development) and Mr. Vincent Simoongwe (MFL's Chief Livestock Production Officer).

ZDTP Programme Country Manager Ms. Tania Thomson said it was great the Minister was able to meet Board members from the Liteta Dairy Cooperative Union, as well as ZDTP staff from other districts.

Mr. Golden Kaala, chairperson of the Liteta Dairy Cooperative Union, told Professor Luo that Liteta was much stronger both financially and in terms of skills to manage the cooperative thanks to support from ZDTP Business Support Officer Mr. Marvellous Chansa.

Mr. Chansa provided an overview of the work he'd been doing with the Board in relation to improving record keeping, financial management and milk quality, and shared details of the Liteta Dairy Saving and Lending Group, which was started by the Liteta Dairy Cooperative Union with support from the Dairy Association of Zambia in July 2019.

ZDTP Field Extension Manager Mr. Kelvin Mulusa said that during the meeting, the Board of the Liteta Dairy Cooperative Union appealed to the Minister for inclusion in MFL's stocking / restocking programme.

"The district administrator has now been tasked with assessing and coming up with deserving farmers," he said.

After the MCC, the MFL delegation visited dairy farms belonging to Mr. Gilbert Mweemba and Ms. Sabina Sibanda.

Mr. Mweemba showed the group his concrete silage pit, made with support from the ZDTP, plus some fresh maize silage.

"Gilbert and [ZDTP Field Extension Officer Kelvin Mulusa] were able to provide information on how the silage was made and how it is to be used as feed in line with the recommendations in our fact sheets," said Ms. Thomson.

"Gilbert reinforced that silage is so important for dairy farmers during the dry season, such as now when there is almost no vegetation around. Kelvin also provided an overview of how to make Dairy 19 and Gilbert mentioned how his cows enjoy eating homemade concentrate (Dairy 19 equivalent), so they happily enter the milking parlour."



Above: Gilbert Mweemba, ZDTP Extension Officer and Focus Farmer explaining the benefits of silage to the Minister of Fisheries and Livestock, Professor Nkandu Luo, senior officials from MFL, farmers and local dignitaries.

At the next farm, the delegation saw another silage pit (not concrete) and Ms. Sibanda talked the group through her daily milking and cleaning routines on the farm, which is home to 12 dairy animals.

Ms. Sibanda, who has noticed an increase in her animals' milk production since working with the ZDTP, also explained how she uses Sunlight detergent to make an affordable Rapid Mastitis Test to test animals for mastitis.

Mr. Mulusa said Professor Luo was impressed with the passion she saw in the farmers she met and provided them with encouragement to continue their efforts to ensure agriculture is a mainstay of the Zambian economy.

"She also mentioned how helpful it would be to find ways and means to duplicate ZDTP efforts in other needy areas such as Northern Province," he said.

"The Minister ... urged [MFL officers] to get involved and provide support to such initiatives."

Ms. Thomson said it was heartening to hear the Minister acknowledge the value of the simple solutions being promoted by the ZDTP and expressing interest in ensuring these are disseminated to other areas of the country.

"Professor Luo also recognised the importance of water for dairy farming and the challenges many farmers in Liteta and other places have accessing water, which is also important in the fight against COVID-19."

Farmers recruit younger family members to help with farm business management

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The RTM forms also act as a useful record for farmers' dairy farming enterprises, as they can be used to analyse past activity and make future projections – and more informed management decisions. The practice helps farmers to, ultimately, determine whether they are making a profit or loss when they compare their cost of production of milk to the market price. ZDTP Programme Country Manager Tania Thomson says the increased uptake appeared to result from the dissemination of the ZDTP's fifth quarterly report in early 2019.

"It was the first time farmers had the opportunity to compare data between previous years (i.e. October to December 2017 with October to December 2018) and could see the value records can bring to farm management," Tania says.

"As of 30 June 2020, 88 farmers had submitted data for May 2020 which is more than double the number (43) who originally started on the scheme."

ZDTP staff investigated reasons for farmers dropping out of the scheme and found they included farmers being disappointed they did not receive an "immediate benefit" (i.e. seeds, milk cans, cattle or other inputs), farmers being "too busy" or finding the forms too complicated or "boring" to complete.

Tania says some farmers who dropped off had since re-joined the RTM scheme after seeing benefits accrued by their peers. "What is most pleasing about the RTM initiative is that farmers are promoting the benefits to their peers," Tania says. "At a training session in Kwanshama in August 2019 one of our Focus Farmers and a former RTM farmer who [planned] to re-join the scheme were extremely positive about the value of the RTM and were able to explain to their fellow farmers how to fill in the form and the usefulness of the information provided in the quarterly reports."

There are currently 15 farmers in Kwanshama on the scheme, compared to seven farmers who started. We also have four more farmers who would like to join and are currently organising a half day training session so they can begin completing the forms in September 2020. "To date the scheme has a retention rate of 75 per cent and the fact that more farmers are asking to join the scheme continues to emphasise that farmers will adopt techniques if they find them useful, but that time is required to ensure the benefit of any intervention is realised," Tania says.

Beatrice Mwilima, our outgoing EO for Chibombo and Liteta, says getting farmers involved in the RTM had not been a challenge "but keeping them [involved] has been," she says. "Farmers are interested in the scheme but fail to continuously fill in the forms because of farm activities or low levels of education." Some older members of the dairy community have enlisted the help of younger members of their family to complete the forms, which is great to see as it encourages them to participate in the dairy value chain.

For more information on the RTM scheme, or if you would like to join, please contact ZDTP Country Manager Tania Thomson on tania@primeconsultants.net or +260 96 456 4206 (WhatsApp or text).

The ZDTP is focused on supporting dairy farmers to improve their productivity, milk quality and linkages to urban markets. The views expressed in this publication are those of the implementers of the programme and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government. For further information, please contact ZDTP Country Manager Tania Thomson on tania@primeconsultants.net or +260 96 456 4206.