

Zambia Dairy Transformation Programme

FEBRUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the latest edition of our monthly newsletter, which summarises activities carried out under the Zambia Dairy Transformation Programme (ZDTP) in February 2021.

Good calf rearing crucial to a cow's milk production over its lifetime

The recent increase in the milk price is welcome news for farmers. However, we've become aware that some farmers are prioritising instant cash through selling milk from newly calved cows instead of feeding this milk to their calves.

As calves and heifers are your future milking animals, it is important to look after them properly. Remember, calves need milk during the first 10 weeks of life.

By feeding calves well and providing them with good care, you will ensure proper daily growth and avoid animals dying.

While the impacts of feeding may not be immediately obvious, the differences in your animals will become clear over time. Calves which are well fed will grow into strong heifers. Poorly-reared animals will produce fewer calves and less milk.

For a breakdown of how this might impact your income as a Zambian dairy farmer, check out fact sheet *H05D – Benefits of Calf Feeding and Care* at zambiadairy.com.

Maize harvesting

The harvesting of maize for silage making is well underway in the ZDTP's target areas. Maize should be harvested when it is at the 'milky stage', i.e., when crushing the kernels between your fingers results in a creamy, white-ish substance. It is best to harvest your maize when it is not raining... and then the chopping begins!



Variations in crop health highlight differences in planting times

ZDTP's operational areas continued to receive good rains in February, meaning crop growth was good in most areas. The silage production forecast shows more silage will be produced this year compared with last year.

As we carry out our work, we're always keen to identify ways farmers can maximise silage production.

In February, Kelvin Mulusa, our Field Extension Manager, recorded images of two maize plots in Mufulira (see below).



One plot was dry planted on 26th October 2020 (left of picture) and the other was planted on 27th December 2020 (right of picture). It started to rain in mid-November 2020 and has continued to rain since.

Kelvin was very interested in the stark difference in colouration of the crops – green for the dry planted maize (left) and yellow for the later planted crop (right). He also noted that the early planted crop (i.e. before the rains) grew better than the one that was planted late December.

ZDTP's Livestock Feeds and Forage Specialist Kalipochi Kawonga says that the yellow coloration of the late planted crop is a typical sign of lack of Nitrogen (N) – with late planting increasing the likelihood of intense weed competition for nutrients like Nitrogen.

In simple terms, weed infestations deprive crops of nutrients. Farmers are encouraged to plant early and aim to keep their fields weed free to achieve better crop growth.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW TEAM MEMBER

Gelly Mwiinga



Gelly Mwiinga joined the ZDTP as an Extension Officer in January 2021 and is operating in the Mufulira district.

Before joining the ZDTP, he was a farmer rearing beef animals and goats and doing horticulture. Growing up in

Southern Province, Gelly helped manage his father's farm. After gaining a qualification in general agriculture in 2013, he went on to work in the Copperbelt and became involved in dairy production. "From

2016 to date I've been requested by different farmers to help them with information on how to keep dairy animals." He has also advised beef farmers on matters of management and disease control. Gelly says he is happy to have a role with the ZDTP because "it will help me grow my CV and teach my fellow farmers more information on dairy production". He says some of the challenges faced by dairy farmers in Mufulira include the

high cost of feed and the long distances to their closest Milk Collection Centre.

Record keeping, hygienic milking practices and home-made feed key to successful dairy farming



Looking after the animals is a joint effort between Kwanshama dairy farmer Hellen Mubanga, her family and workers. Hellen makes sure she shares her knowledge at every opportunity. “We have involved all of the young family members. I could kick the bucket tomorrow and they should be able to take over. The animals shouldn’t suffer, the farm shouldn’t suffer [and] the legacy should go on.”

Hellen has been dairy farming for a decade and started making silage to feed to her 30 milking animals after taking part in the ZDTP study tour to New Zealand in March 2020. “We didn’t know there were so many ways of feeding our animals until [ZDTP staff] encouraged us to grow our own maize and [make] silage.” Since adopting these practices on her farm, she says, “feed has been quite cheap”.

Learning about how to prevent mastitis was another big win because it meant she could avoid the frustration of milk being rejected from her local Milk Collection Centre. “After cleaning [the milking parlour] with water, we [now] use disinfectant to make sure that all the bacteria is wiped out.” Before milking, Hellen and her staff also clean their animals’ udders. “[We] clean them nicely with lukewarm water to make sure that [any] bacteria on the teats or hanging around the udder doesn’t get in the milk.”

Keeping records is another practice that Hellen has adopted. She admits she was cynical about it in the past, when veterinary officers tried to encourage record keeping. “I just used to think, ‘These people are wasting my time’ and off I’d go.” But she now records the date and type of medication given to treat any sick animals. Without doing so, she says, “you might find that you are just repeating the same medications”. Check out an interview with Hellen at <https://vimeo.com/530134552>.



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.