



Issue N°3

# IDF WOMEN IN DAIRY REPORT



# CONTENTS

<b>Messages from the Co-Chairs of the IDF Task Force on Women in Dairy . . . . .</b>	<b>Women in Blue, Empowering Female Talent Within DeLaval . . . . .</b>
4	22
<b>Empowering Women Across the Dairy Value Chain: IDF's Global Contribution to Gender Equality . . . . .</b>	<b>Good Agricultural Practices: a Project Unveiling Female Power in the Dairy Industry . . . . .</b>
6	24
<b>Cultivating Future Dairy Leaders: Enhancing Dairy Science Education and Championing Female Student Success . . . . .</b>	<b>Dairy Women Ireland, a Vibrant Organisation That Connects and Empowers Women Across the Irish Dairy Sector . . . . .</b>
8	26
<b>Cream of the Crop: Let's Celebrate, Inspire and Educate Rural Women in Dairy . . . . .</b>	<b>Women Moo'ving Dairy Towards Better Standards and Sustainability . . . . .</b>
11	28
<b>From Invisible to Indispensable: Driving Inclusive Growth Through Bangladesh's Women Farmers. . . . .</b>	<b>Lady Livestock Workers: Empowering Rural Women through Dairy Entrepreneurship . . . . .</b>
13	31
<b>"Women in Cattle" Initiative: Promoting Female Leadership and Sustainability in Chile's Livestock Sector . . . . .</b>	<b>Women Leading the Way: Junlebao Reshapes the Dairy Industry Chain with Scientific, Technological and Empowering Innovation. . . . .</b>
16	33
<b>Building a Sustainable Dairy Future Through a Women's Fodder Collective - A Case of Shaktifarms Fodder Producer's Cooperative Society Limited. . . . .</b>	<b>Tryst with Empowerment - A Story of Transformation through Women-led Dairying in India. . . . .</b>
18	37
<b>A tribute to pioneering women in dairy. . . . .</b>	
20	

## About this publication

The Women in Dairy Report by the International Dairy Federation (IDF) explores efforts around the world to empower women within the dairy sector. This publication provides insights into how women are supported to thrive and address challenges in transformative food systems. It highlights various initiatives and research linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The report covers a broad range of activities across the dairy value chain—from farming and processing to research and education, and policy and governance—showcasing the sector's commitment to advancing gender equality and fostering sustainable development worldwide.

## Reference statement

International Dairy Federation. (2025). *IDF Women in Dairy Report* (Issue N°3).  
<https://doi.org/10.56169/GIGV1863>

## Reproduction statement

© International Dairy Federation AISBL October 2025. Copyright in all or part of this publication rests with IDF. Save where and to the extent expressly permitted within this document, no part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means including graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or web distribution, without the written permission of IDF or in line with the rules of an existing licence.



# FOREWORD

The International Dairy Federation (IDF) is proud to present the third edition of the IDF Women in Dairy Report—a testament to our acknowledgment on the importance of gender equality, diversity, and the empowerment of women and girls across the global dairy sector. This year's publication brings together 14 articles from every region of the world, reflecting the remarkable breadth and depth of women's contributions to dairy.

A highlight of this edition is the new section, “A Tribute to Pioneering Women in Dairy”, which honors the historical pioneers whose vision, resilience, and leadership have shaped the sector and inspired generations. By recognizing these pioneers, we celebrate not only their achievements but also the legacy they have created for women in dairy today and tomorrow.

IDF's willingness to advancing gender equality is rooted in our alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5. Through the dedicated work of the IDF Task Force on Women in Dairy, we continue to highlight initiatives that empower women, which foster inclusive growth and ultimately will help drive the evolution of sustainable food systems. Beyond the alignment with SDG5, data shows us that women empowerment is a critical lever for maximizing impact and creating positive outcomes. This year, IDF is proud to have partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in support of its “Commit to Grow Equality” initiative, further amplifying the impact of women in dairy worldwide.

This year also marks a pivotal evolution in IDF's strategy. Recognizing that true sustainability extends beyond products and processes, we are placing greater emphasis on culture and people. By making “Culture and People” a pillar of our new strategy, IDF is committed to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and diverse dairy sector. We invite the global dairy community to join us in this journey—by sharing scientific data, best practices, and lived experiences that illuminate the cultural dimensions of dairy and the people who make it thrive.

As you explore the insights in this report, I encourage you to reflect on the progress we have made, the challenges that remain, and the collective responsibility we share to ensure that women and girls everywhere can realize their full potential in the dairy sector. Together, let us continue to champion inclusion, celebrate excellence, and build a more resilient and equitable future for all.

On behalf of IDF, I extend my deepest gratitude to all contributors who make this work possible.

**Laurence Rycken**

IDF Director General



# Messages from the Co-Chairs of the IDF Task Force on Women in Dairy

Across the world, the inclusion of women in agriculture is not just desirable – it's essential. Women add expertise, innovation, and leadership to every aspect of the agricultural value chain. In the dairy sector in particular, their contributions are critical and wide-ranging, from advancing cutting-edge science and research, to driving business development, managing and leading farms, and ensuring excellence in food quality and safety.

The evidence is clear: diversity enhances positive outcomes. Data consistently shows that teams which are gender, ethnically, and age diverse, make better decisions and achieve stronger profitability than those that are less diverse. This reinforces the case for ensuring that women are fully supported and empowered within the dairy sector at every level.

That is why this publication is so valuable. Once again, it highlights the many initiatives and programmes being implemented around the world to foster inclusion and to advance **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality)**. These examples showcase the creativity and commitment of our sector in creating opportunities, breaking down barriers, and recognising the pivotal role of women in dairying.



Throughout the world, women continue to contribute their expertise, time, resources, experience, and care to a vast range of situations that contribute to the development of the world. This latest IDF report showcases many such cases, and we are delighted to have such a range of projects to share with you, from Europe, to Africa, to the Americas, Oceania, and Asia, inspiring us with real world challenges, and successes, in the global dairy world.



I am delighted to see such a breadth of contributions to this report. Publications like this not only celebrate progress but also inspire continued action. I would like to sincerely thank all contributors for sharing their work and the IDF team for bringing together this important resource.

## **Dr Judith Bryans**

Chief Executive, Dairy UK

Co-Chair IDF Task Force on Women in Dairy

But still, we must continue this work and not give up. Every year the strength and commitment of our global dairy women grows in knowledge and lived experience, which builds the resources for the years and the generations to come.

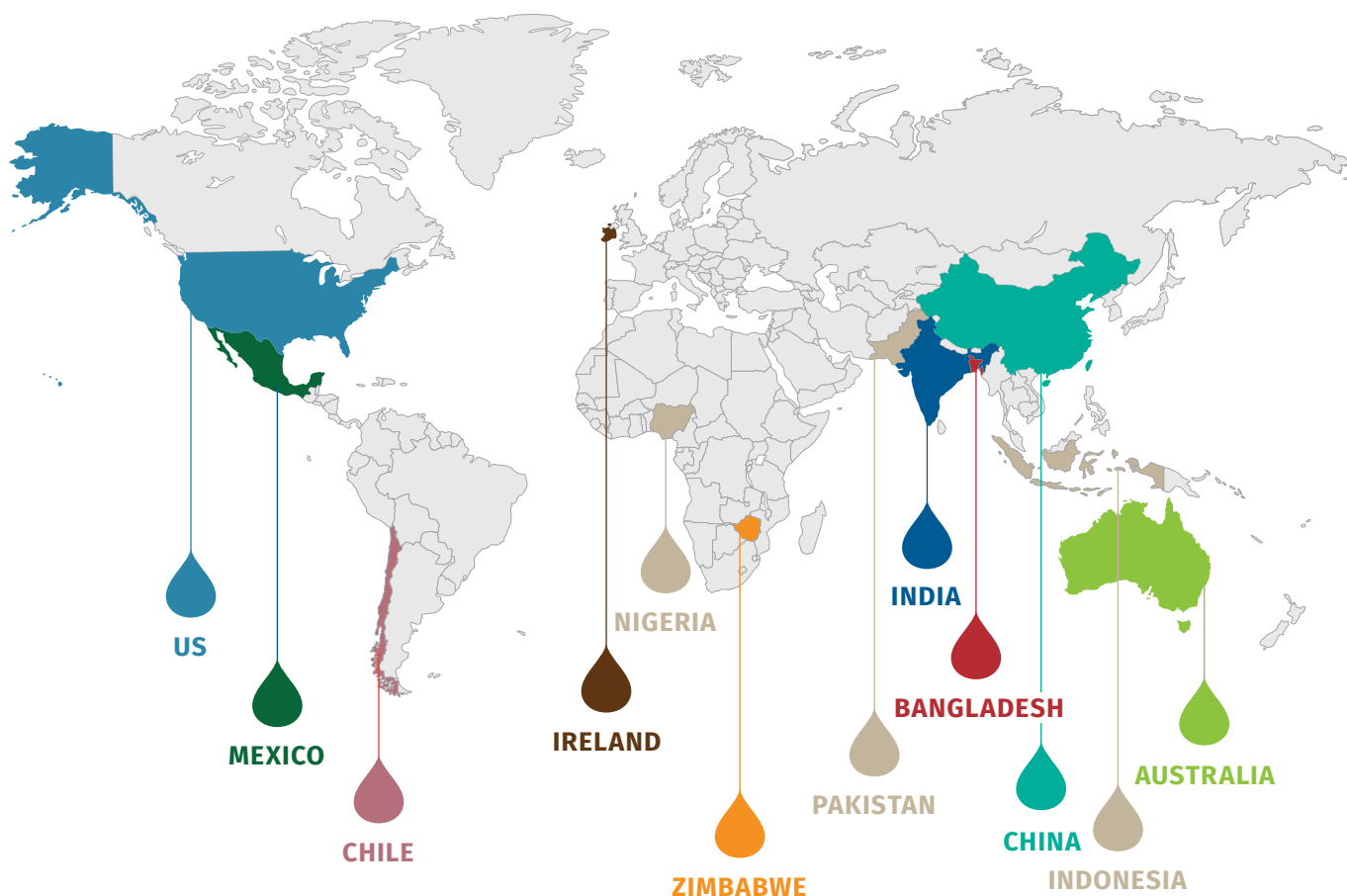
To all the women in dairy globally, thank you for all that you do, and how you do it. You continue to inspire us all.

In appreciation,

## **Ms Lynda McDonald**

Co-Chair IDF Task Force on Women in Dairy

















## GLOBAL

IDF - Empowering Women Across the Dairy Value Chain: IDF's Global Contribution to Gender Equality

000 - A tribute to pioneering women in dairy

-  From Invisible to Indispensable: Driving Inclusive Growth Through Bangladesh's Women Farmers
-  Good Agricultural Practices: a Project Unveiling Female Power in the Dairy Industry
-  "Women in Cattle" Initiative: Promoting Female Leadership and Sustainability in Chile's Livestock Sector
-  Women Leading the Way: Junlebao Reshapes the Dairy Industry Chain with Scientific, Technological and Empowering Innovation.
-  Women Moo'ving Dairy Towards Better Standards and Sustainability
-  Building a Sustainable Dairy Future Through a Women's Fodder Collective - A Case of Shaktifarms Fodder Producer's Cooperative Society Limited
-  Tryst with Empowerment - A Story of Transformation through Women-led Dairying in India
-  Cream of the Crop: Let's Celebrate, Inspire and Educate Rural Women in Dairy
-  Lady Livestock Workers: Empowering Rural Women through Dairy Entrepreneurship
-  Dairy Women Ireland, a Vibrant Organisation That Connects and Empowers Women Across the Irish Dairy Sector.
-  Cultivating Future Dairy Leaders: Enhancing Dairy Science Education and Championing Female Student Success
-  Women in Blue, Empowering Female Talent Within DeLaval

IDF

# Empowering Women Across the Dairy Value Chain: IDF's Global Contribution to Gender Equality

## AUTHOR

Anabel Mulet Cabero, International  
Dairy Federation (IDF) • International

## The big picture

Women play a vital role in agrifood systems, including the dairy sector, where they contribute significantly across production, processing, and distribution. Yet, their work is often undervalued—marked by informality, low pay, and limited decision-making power. This gender gap undermines not only women's livelihoods, but also the resilience and productivity of the entire dairy value chain. Accelerating progress toward gender equality is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), and 5 (Gender Equality).

More advancement is needed, and the initiative [Commit to Grow Equality](#), led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), mobilizes stakeholders to invest in women's empowerment through targeted actions and partnerships.

For the dairy sector, this means recognizing women's contributions, improving access to resources and leadership roles, and creating inclusive policies. Empowering women in dairy is a strategic investment in sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems.

## The premise

IDF raises awareness of women's contributions across agri-food systems, promoting inclusive leadership and gender equality. This commitment strengthens the dairy value chain by enhancing resilience, productivity, and sustainability through women's full participation and recognition.



IDF Women in Dairy Roundtable Chicago 2023

© IDF

“The dairy sector is committed to SDG 5, recognizing gender equality as essential for a sustainable future. By sharing case studies, we aim to inspire action, showcase the importance, and highlight the benefits of empowering women.”

**Laurence Rycken, IDF Director General**

## Getting the wheel in motion

In 2022, IDF established the Task Force on Women in Dairy to strengthen the visibility and impact of women across the global dairy value chain. The task force aims to:

- Bridge the knowledge gap by collecting facts and stories that highlight women's roles and contributions in all segments of the dairy sector.

- Inspire future generations by showcasing women as role models in science, agriculture, and the food industry.
- Provide a global network that supports women in developing their expertise and advancing their careers in dairy.

The task force currently includes 25 members from diverse regions around the world.

## The history of success

IDF has become a partner in the FAO initiative Commit to Grow Equality in 2025 ([see here](#)). IDF's commitment aims to collect and share facts and stories that highlight the role of women in all aspects of the dairy value chain and their contributions to women's empowerment through dairy. Central to this commitment is the IDF flagship publication IDF Women in Dairy Report which features a diverse array of initiatives and research linked to SDG 5, spanning the entire dairy value chain – from farming and industry to research, policy, and governance. Previous editions:

- [IDF Women in Dairy Report 2023](#)
- [IDF Women in Dairy Report 2024](#)

IDF has also supported this area through other activities:

### 1. Events:

Virtual webinar celebrating International Women's Day (8 March) with initiatives, frameworks and case studies:

- [Webinar 2023](#)
- [Webinar 2024](#)
- [Webinar 2025](#)

In person events bringing together global stakeholders to discuss challenges and opportunities for women in dairy:

- Women in Dairy Roundtable Chicago 2023 (Figure 1)
- Women in Dairy Roundtable Paris 2024 (Figure 2)

### 2. IDF Women in Dairy Knowledge Hub

A [centralized platform](#) offering resources, case studies, and tools to support gender equality in dairy.

### 3. IDF Dairy Innovation Awards

A new category on [Innovation in Women Empowerment](#) was added to recognise innovative initiatives that promote the growing female leadership in the dairy value chain all over the world.

### 4. Networking platforms:

Discord – [IDF Women in Dairy Forum](#).

### 5. Other publications:

[Factsheet of the IDF N° 26/ 2023](#): Dairy in the nutritional empowerment of women

## The value of the initiative

By showcasing global initiatives through the Women in Dairy Report and complementary initiatives—such as webinars, roundtables, awards, and knowledge-sharing platforms, IDF not only aims to raise awareness, but also to catalyse action across the dairy sector. These efforts serve as a call to adopt inclusive practices that foster gender equality and sustainable development.



## UNITED STATES

# Cultivating Future Dairy Leaders: Enhancing Dairy Science Education and Championing Female Student Success

## AUTHOR

Grace Lewis, University of Wisconsin – River Falls • United States

✉ [grace.lewis@uwrf.edu](mailto:grace.lewis@uwrf.edu)

## The big picture

Understanding what drives student retention in dairy science majors—and their continued pursuit of dairy-related careers after graduation—is essential to the industry's growth. However, retention data, particularly for female students, is often overlooked. At the same time, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles across the dairy sector, highlighting the need for intentional efforts to create more equitable career opportunities. The present initiative analyses the factors influencing student retention and persistence in their career after graduation, with a focus on the disparities in perceived support between female and male students, particularly in mental health services. It also identifies strategies to enhance learning outcomes and strengthen student support within higher education.

## The premise

The goal is to recognize the best practices required to empower the next generation of female dairy leaders through innovative education, inclusive support, and strategies that enhance student success and well-being.

## Getting the wheel in motion

At the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, the majority of the undergraduate student population is female, and this trend holds true within the agricultural science-related degrees. In fact, many universities report statistically more women than men in agriculture-related fields, yet the percentage

“With more women pursuing postsecondary degrees in agriculture-related fields, there’s growing potential to strengthen female representation in leadership roles across the dairy sector. The ultimate goal is to empower the next generation of female dairy leaders through innovative education, inclusive support, and strategies that enhance student success and well-being.”

Grace Lewis

of women in leadership roles within the dairy industry remains concerningly low (Allen, 2023). There is a need for intentional efforts to understand this disparity, and that starts with evaluating the shortcomings within higher education and highlighting feasible approaches to better support students throughout their academic career and beyond.

## The history of success

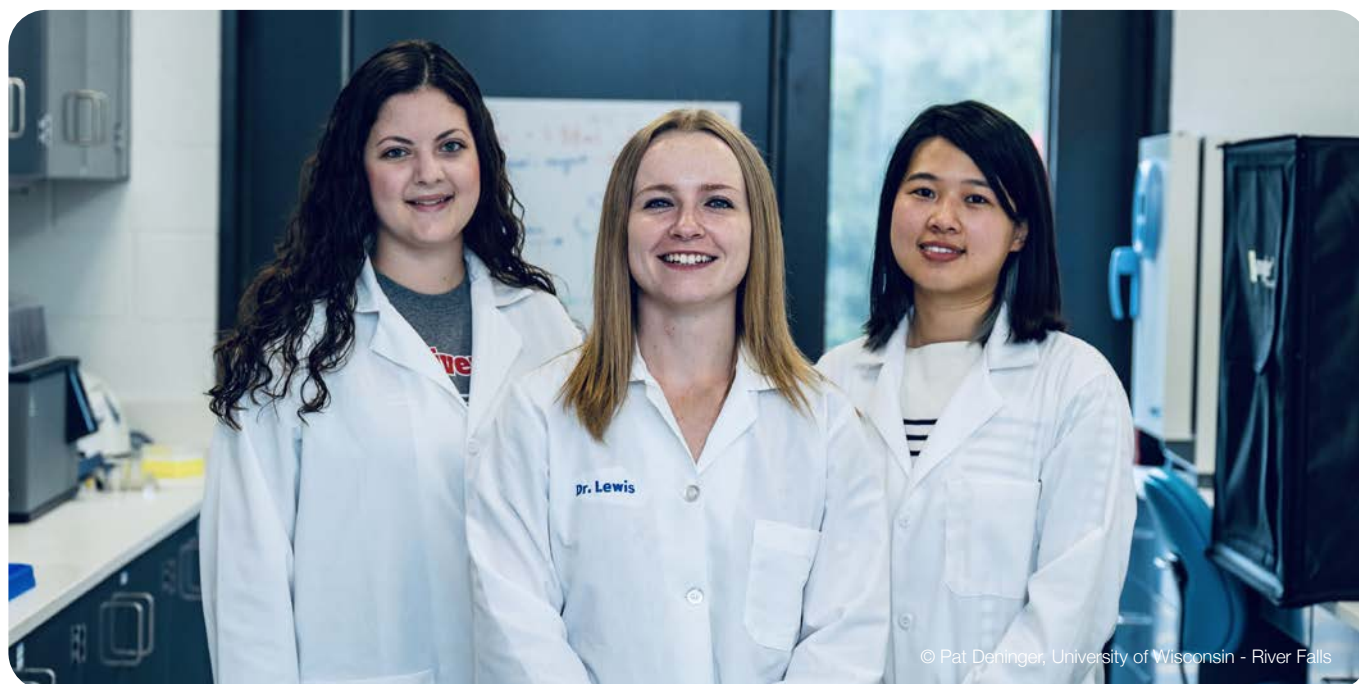
The majority of this work was completed as a thorough literature review resulting in a presentation at the American Dairy Science Association Annual Meeting. After that meeting, I was asked to write and publish these findings within the Journal of Dairy Science Communications (Grace, 2025),

see graphical abstract in Figure 1. Although this was a relatively atypical publication within a science-based journal, it has received significant attention including news reports by Cheese Reporter and others. Ideally, educators and employers would use the findings of this work to apply innovative educational strategies and provide inclusive support, especially considering reported gender inequities.

## The value of the initiative

Among many other findings, this work highlighted a disparity in mental health-related concerns between female and male students, with female students reporting higher levels of anxiety, trauma, and depressive symptomology, self-





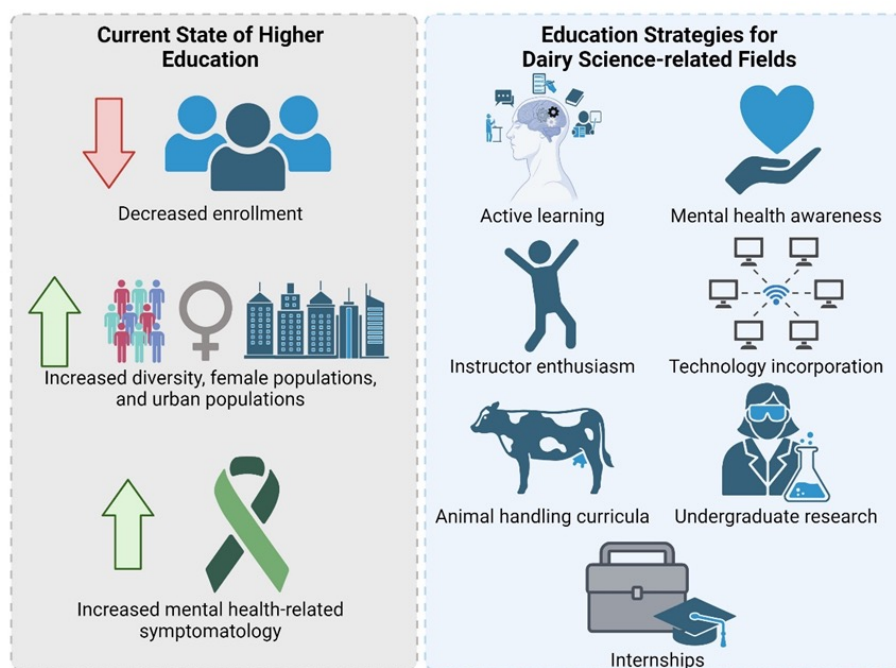
© Pat Deninger, University of Wisconsin - River Falls

Undergraduate student researchers (left: Kate Petersen, right: Yihong Deng) in the Dairy Processing and Innovation Lab run by Dr. Grace Lewis (middle). The laboratory conducts research on the functional and value enhancement of dairy foods and dairy-derived ingredients for applications in food and pharmaceutical formulations.

harming behavior, and suicide attempts. It also suggested strategies to encourage student retention and persistence including enthusiastic teaching, active learning approaches, high-impact practices, and career exploration. This initiative equips educators and industry leaders with insights into the unique challenges women face in the dairy sector, enabling them to implement targeted strategies that support well-being and success. These efforts can help underrepresented groups persist within the field of dairy science.

### Next steps and opportunities

Through this initiative, I have been given many opportunities to discuss my findings, allowing me to disseminate these critical findings to the general population (see publication and press releases below). Recently, I was also asked about this work in a Dairy Digressions podcast. I will continue to take advantage of these opportunities. I will also be looking for funding to research this subject at various dairy science programs throughout the United States, generating new, insightful data on this topic.



**Figure 1.** Graphical abstract from the associated Journal of Dairy Science Communications publication. Grace, 2025 - Created with BioRender.com.

### More information

Presentation abstract: [American Dairy Science Association Annual Meeting](#)

News Reports: [Cheese Reporter](#), [American Dairy Science Association](#), [Elsevier](#)

Podcast: [Dairy Digressions](#)

Allen, K. (2023). Dairy needs diversity—That includes women. Hoard's Dairyman, <https://hoards.com/article-34351-dairy-needs-diversity&mdash-that-includes-women.html>. Date: 2023. Date accessed: November 1, 2024.

Grace, L. (2025). Engaging today's undergraduate students in the field of dairy science with a focus on the female student population. JDS Communications, Volume 6, Issue 1, 175 – 179. DOI: [10.3168/jdsc.2024-0647](https://doi.org/10.3168/jdsc.2024-0647).





The Organising Committee of Cream of the Crop



## AUSTRALIA

# Cream of the Crop: Let's Celebrate, Inspire and Educate Rural Women in Dairy

## AUTHOR

Lucy Collins, Renata Cummings, Chloe Brown, Jess Brown - Cream of the Crop • Australia

✉ [creamofthecropau@gmail.com](mailto:creamofthecropau@gmail.com)

## The big picture

Cream of the Crop is a grassroots initiative led by four Australian dairy farmers and service providers, designed to celebrate, inspire, and educate rural women in dairy. It directly supports SDG 5 by creating a platform that amplifies women's voices, builds confidence, and encourages leadership across the dairy value chain. The conference fosters connection between women working on farms, in service roles, processing, education, and governance, highlighting the diversity of contributions in the industry. By empowering women through storytelling, professional development, and community, Cream of the Crop addresses barriers to participation and leadership that many rural women face. It also builds the visibility of women's roles and helps develop the next generation of leaders. With themes that evolve annually in response to industry needs, it strengthens the social fabric of rural communities while advancing gender equality and capability in the dairy sector.

## The premise

Cream of the Crop aims to empower, connect and uplift rural women in dairy by providing an inclusive platform for learning, storytelling, and leadership. The initiative helps women build confidence, develop skills, and see their value and potential across all levels of the dairy industry.

## Getting the wheel in motion

Cream of the Crop was launched in 2022 by four Victorian dairy farmers and service providers who recognised the need for a dedicated space for rural women in dairy to connect and grow. The inaugural two-day conference was held in Port Campbell, featuring keynote speakers, interactive workshops, and networking opportunities. With overwhelmingly positive feedback, the initiative became an annual event, rotating through different dairy regions. Each year, themes evolve to reflect current industry needs, with topics like succession, safety,

HR, storytelling, and governance. Organised entirely by farmers, the initiative is supported by sponsors, scholarships, and strong community and industry engagement.

## The history of success

Since 2022, Cream of the Crop has hosted over 300 participants, with an additional 125 attending in 2025, drawing women from across the dairy supply chain and rural communities. Attendees report feeling more confident, connected, and inspired to step into leadership roles. The initiative has attracted strong sponsorship support and industry recognition, including scholarships that have enabled young women to attend. Many participants have advanced to take on public speaking roles, governance positions, or expanded responsibilities on-farm, and in their communities. The success of the conference has proven the value of peer-led, regionally delivered leadership development for women in dairy.



Echuca - Moama event 2024

© Cream of the Crop

“We’re determined to have the meaningful conversations needed to ensure women are well represented in our industry and given access to personal and professional development opportunities to help them achieve their goals.”

— Lucy Collins, Co-Founder, Cream of the Crop

### The value of the initiative

Cream of the Crop uniquely celebrates and uplifts rural women in dairy by creating a supportive space to share knowledge, inspire confidence, and build leadership skills. Success stems from its grassroots farmer-led approach, fostering genuine connection and empowerment in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Key challenges included overcoming geographical isolation, and engaging diverse women across farming roles, which were addressed through inclusive event formats and ongoing community building. This model is scalable through regional adaptations, offering a blueprint for empowering women in other rural industries worldwide.

### Next steps and opportunities

The initiative plans to expand its reach with more regional events and digital engagement platforms, increasing accessibility for remote participants. Strengthening partnerships with industry bodies and sponsors will enhance resource availability and mentorship opportunities. Emerging opportunities include developing targeted training modules and fostering youth involvement to secure future female leadership in dairy. Cream of the Crop also aims to document its impact more comprehensively, encouraging replication internationally to inspire women farmers globally.



Port Campbell – Inaugural event 2022

© Cream of the Crop



Koroit event 2023

© Cream of the Crop

### More information:

**Cream of the Crop Dairy Conference** – official website with event info, speaker bios, and registration. <https://www.creamofthecropau.com/>

### Media Coverage & Articles:

**Cream of the Crop goes north – Dairy News Australia.** Covers the 2024 event in Echuca-Moama with over 110 attendees, highlighting the conference's growing impact. <https://www.dairynewsaustralia.com.au/news/cream-of-the-crop-goes-north/>

**Cream of the Crop is back – Dairy News Australia.** Outlines the return of the event in 2023, featuring quotes from participants on how the event inspired and empowered them. <https://www.dairynewsaustralia.com.au/news/cream-of-the-crop-is-back/>

**Cream of the Crop returns – Western District.** News Shares the story of the 2022 launch and the grassroots efforts of founders to bring women together through shared experiences. <https://www.wdnews.com.au/cream-of-the-crop-returns-2023-02-02>

**Days out for the cream of dairy's crop – Country News.** Profiles the organisers and their commitment to supporting rural women across the dairy sector. <https://www.countrynews.com.au/dairy/days-out-for-the-cream-of-dairys-crop/>

**Dairy Women Shine at Cream of the Crop Conference** – Farm Weekly, April 2024

### Event & Access Platforms

**Eventbrite Listing – Cream of the Crop 2025.** Event information, dates and ticketing for the next conference. <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/cream-of-the-crop-2025-tickets-1336599407809>

**Cream of the Crop Linktree.** Central hub with access to event resources, media coverage, newsletters and podcast links. <https://linktr.ee/CreamoftheCropAU>



## BANGLADESH

# From Invisible to Indispensable: Driving Inclusive Growth Through Bangladesh's Women Farmers

## AUTHORS

Cecilie Reinholdt Christensen, Arla Foods; Irene Quist Mortensen, Arla Foods and Moziball Hoque, Solidaridad Network Asia Ltd.

✉ [cerei@arlafoods.com](mailto:cerei@arlafoods.com)

## The big picture

In Bangladesh, women perform the majority of dairy farm related tasks, yet their contributions are undervalued and largely uncompensated. Entrenched gender norms, limited mobility, and restricted access to markets, finance, and training, mean women have little control over income from milk sales, which typically goes to male relatives. This financial exclusion prevents investment in productivity-enhancing inputs, reinforcing low yields and economic dependency. With smallholder farmers producing 90% of the milk sold locally – 93% of which is traded informally – integrating women into the formal dairy value chain is essential for food safety, income equality, and sustainable growth. Against a backdrop of declining female labour force participation and worsening income inequality, Arla Foods and partners launched the Green Dairy Partnership 2024, focusing on capacity building, climate resilience, and market access specifically for female dairy farmers. Empowering women and promoting their effective participation and leadership across the dairy value chain directly supports SDG 5.

## The premise

The initiative aims to build a sustainable, inclusive dairy value chain in Bangladesh by strengthening the capacities of 8 000 female farmers. It focuses on integrating women into the dairy supply chain, formally recognizing them as farmers, and empowering them to control their income – thereby advancing gender equality and economic empowerment.

“When I first came here as a new bride, my opinions did not matter – new brides aren’t included in family decisions. But now that I’m earning, both my husband and mother-in-law consult with me on everything – whether it’s buying land or improving the house. My opinion is now valued and respected.”

## Getting the wheel in motion

Work began with Arla’s 2016 Human Rights Assessment which led to long-term commitments to support sustainable dairy development and nutrition in Bangladesh. Between 2020 and 2022, Solidaridad ran the Digital Inclusion and Empowerment of Women Dairy Farmers project, focusing on digital access and female empowerment. Recent evaluation demonstrated huge increases in social recognition and household influence for participating women. This project, and the methods employed, directly informed the Green Dairy Partnership in Bangladesh. Running until 2029, the programme supports rural female farmers in Southwest Bangladesh through training and building capacity to adopt green, climate-resilient, and productive dairy farming practices tailored to local conditions.

## The history of success

To date, 4 726 female dairy farmers have been enrolled in the Green Dairy Partnership, and training has commenced, focusing on Arla’s Big 5 pillars – aiming to reduce emissions on farm, increase efficiency, and improve income. To support the project’s success, PRAN Dairy establishes 34 new Village Milk Collection Centres to ensure reliable milk collection for female farmers. Additionally, innovation farms have been launched – 27 out of 44 of these sites have female lead farmers, who serve as role models for the future of dairy in Bangladesh.

## The value of the initiative

The goal of the initiative is to embed women formally within the dairy value chain and to help them experience a personal sense of ownership. The focus is to empower women in dairy by gaining access to an independent income stream, which has



Women take the lead in sharing knowledge and shaping a more inclusive and resilient dairy future.

© Arla



In Khulna, women farmers come together to launch the Green Dairy Partnership and strengthen their place in the dairy sector.

© Arla

been shown to increase intra-household bargaining power and independence, and have positive downstream effects for households, such as better education for children and better nutritional outcomes. Focusing on resilience will help the farmers adapt and mitigate climate change, which is particularly valuable, as women are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

### Next steps and opportunities

Looking ahead, the Green Dairy Partnership aims to expand its reach to more than 30,000 female dairy farmers. The focus will be on training and supporting them throughout the process. The aim is for

these female farmers to become trainers themselves, fostering knowledge sharing and solidarity among women. By becoming role models, they will demonstrate effective farm management and inspire others. The initiative replicates the remarkable outcomes of the Digital Inclusion and Empowerment of Women Dairy Farmers project, where female farmers saw significant income growth, gaining new roles and opportunities within their households and communities.

### More information

Arla's Human Rights Assessment: [milk-market-and-malnutrition-human-rights-assessment-of-scaling-up-affordable-dairy-nutrition-in-bangladesh-final.pdf](#)

Thesis: Milking Change? Exploring Dairy Development as a Pathway to Female Empowerment: [Milking Change Exploring Dairy Development as a Pathway to Female Empowerment.pdf](#)


Solidaridad: [Home - Solidaridad Network](#)

The Green Dairy Partnership external communication: [New forum launched for dairy sector | The Daily Star](#); [Dairy Value Chain Forum launched to advance green farming | The Business Standard](#); [Finance News: Latest Financial News, Finance News today in Bangladesh](#); [New Age | Dairy Value Chain Forum launched](#)

Danida Green Business Partnerships: [Green Dairy Partnership – Creating a sustainable and productive dairy value chain model - Danida Business Partnerships](#)

Solidaridad's Digital Inclusion and Empowerment of Women Dairy Farmers: [Solidaridad's USAID-funded WomenConnect Challenge Project Gains Momentum - Solidaridad Network](#); [Accelerating Pace in Solidaridad's WomenConnect Challenge Project - Solidaridad Network](#); [How women dairy farmers are taking charge with digital solutions - Solidaridad Network](#); [Digital Innovation Connects Women Dairy Farmers to Markets in Bangladesh - Solidaridad Network](#)



A woman with a bindi on her forehead, wearing a vibrant red sari with a colorful abstract pattern in shades of orange, yellow, and blue, stands outdoors. She is holding a large metal bucket filled with white milk in her right hand and a small clear plastic bag in her left. She is smiling at the camera. The background shows a dirt path, some trees, and a person in the distance.

“When I get a bucket full of milk, that overwhelms me. It makes me so happy and proud, because it’s from my own cow.”

## CHILE

# “Women in Cattle” Initiative: Promoting Female Leadership and Sustainability in Chile’s Livestock Sector

## AUTHOR

Mariana Cestau, Zoetis • Chile

✉ [elianna.rodriguezpargas@zoetis.com](mailto:elianna.rodriguezpargas@zoetis.com)

## The big picture

In Chile, women represent only 22% of the workforce in the agriculture, forestry, and livestock sector. To help change this reality, Zoetis launched *Women in Cattle*, an initiative that celebrates women’s leadership in the livestock industry and promotes their professional development through free training and public recognition of their contributions. The programme includes online training open to both women and men working in livestock—such as farmers, veterinarians, researchers, communicators, technicians, and entrepreneurs—with the goal of strengthening technical skills, leadership, and support networks.

This initiative directly supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by fostering visibility, inclusion, and equal participation in decision-making throughout the livestock value chain. By acknowledging the vital role women play in animal health, productivity, and sustainability, *Women in Cattle* helps build a more diverse, equitable, and resilient cattle industry—one that is better prepared for the challenges of the future.

## The premise

The initiative aims to highlight the valuable contributions of women in livestock, promote female leadership, and address a key challenge for the sector: generational succession. By fostering inclusion and empowerment, *Women in Cattle* helps build a more sustainable, diverse, and future-ready livestock industry in Chile.

## Getting the wheel in motion

The *Women in Cattle* initiative was launched in Chile in March 2025 to advance gender

“Inclusion isn’t just a goal—it’s the way forward to a stronger and more sustainable livestock industry.”

equity in the livestock sector. It began with the creation of a free, virtual training program open to both women and men across the cattle value chain. The first modules—focused on leadership, technical knowledge, and communication—was delivered on August 21st. In parallel, Zoetis launched a public recognition campaign to highlight impactful female and male leaders in the industry. The initiative remains active, with additional training sessions and a national awards event planned through the end of 2025.

## The history of success

The *Women in Cattle* programme has proven impactful in every country where it has been implemented, highlighting the critical role of women in such a significant industry. In Spain and Mexico, it increased visibility for women and their active participation in productive decisions—becoming a driver of inspiration and cultural change. In Chile, although in its early stages, the initiative has already sparked broad engagement across the sector and laid the groundwork for a more inclusive livestock value chain. It is expected to benefit over 500 professionals through training, visibility, and the public recognition of transformative female and male leaders.

## The value of the initiative

A key learning from *Women in Cattle* is that visibility and recognition are powerful catalysts for cultural transformation. Success was driven by a clear purpose,

strong collaboration, and the authentic voices of women across the livestock sector. One challenge was ensuring the initiative resonated across diverse rural contexts, which was addressed through inclusive design and accessible formats. The digital, no-cost training model proved both scalable and adaptable, enabling reach beyond traditional geographic and institutional boundaries. This experience shows that with the right platform, women’s leadership can be strengthened and celebrated, creating lasting impact across the livestock value chain.

## Next steps and opportunities

The next phase of *Women in Cattle* includes expanding training content, launching a national recognition event in late 2025, and developing a mentorship network to connect experienced women in livestock with younger professionals. Zoetis is also exploring opportunities to replicate the initiative in other Latin American countries, adapting it to local contexts. The positive reception in Chile has opened the doors to partner with producer associations, universities, and public agencies to broaden impact. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration and integrating field-based activities are key steps to ensure the continued momentum and long-term cultural change in the livestock industry.

## More information

[Entrevista Radio La Metro, Mariana Cestau](#)

[Revista del Campo – El Mercurio](#)

[Entrevista TXS Plus, Mariana Cestau](#)





## INDIA

# Building a Sustainable Dairy Future Through a Women's Fodder Collective - A Case of Shaktifarms Fodder Producer's Cooperative Society Limited

## AUTHOR

Meenesh Shah, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) • India

✉ [aditya@nddb.coop](mailto:aditya@nddb.coop)

## The big picture

India's dairy success (world's largest milk producer) relies on millions of smaller farms, for whom milk production is a critical livelihood. Yet high feed costs—about 70% of milk production—threaten sustainability. While concentrate feeds have supply chains, dry and green fodder often face shortages in certain months. Forming fodder collectives like the Shaktifarms Fodder Producer's Cooperative Society in Uttarakhand, offers a solution.

This all-women Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) unites 546 members to secure year-round fodder and expanded agri-input services. Women, already the backbone of livestock care, gain equal access to resources, boosting dairy income, food security, and family well-being. Supported by India's plan to promote 10 000 FPOs, the group strengthens the dairy value chain and advances SDG 5 - enhancing women's leadership, resource access, and technology use.

By turning dairy into a sustainable agri-business, the Shaktifarms model shows how community-based action can overcome fodder scarcity and empower rural women as entrepreneurs.

## The premise

The main goal of the initiative is to build an organized, sustainable fodder supply chain by enhancing green fodder production, improving seed systems, managing crop residues, promoting fodder commercialization, and empowering farmers especially women through technology, innovation, and collective enterprise models.

## Rooted in Fodder, Rising with Women - Building a Resilient Dairy Future

### Getting the wheel in motion

Launched on 15 June 2023, the initiative links 546 women farmers with support from Government and collaborators. It began with capacity-building and understanding for the Board that enabled the FPO to adopt a phased procurement strategy for green maize, rent a silage baler, and produce 50 kg silage bales. These are provided to farmers ensuring access to year-round nutritious fodder as well as supplying seeds and Napier cuttings to encourage farms to self-cultivate. The FPO procures wheat straw from farmers and supplies densified fodder block to milk producers and cattle feed plant, Rudrapur (UCDF). It also established reliable channels for sourcing dry fodder from third-party suppliers.

### The history of success

In less than two years, Shaktifarm FPO demonstrated remarkable achievements:

- Producing 5 316 MT of silage and 2 195 MT of fodder blocks.
- Supplying 2 600 kg of certified seeds (maize, berseem, jai, rai grass).
- Distributing 41 300 Napier cuttings to members.
- Introducing modern services like drone spraying.

Year-round fodder now sustains dairy herds, boosting milk yields and easing feed shortages for hundreds of farmers. Women gained confidence, decision-making power, and visibility within their communities. With an all-women Board of Directors and over ₹63 million turnover, Shaktifarm exemplifies both economic impact and social empowerment.

### The value of the initiative

The initiative's success lies in the institutionalization of the fodder value chain, formally involving women in agricultural enterprises through structured organizational frameworks of a cooperative. It stabilizes fodder access during lean periods and strengthens the dairy value chain – reducing the burden on individual farmers to secure fodder independently. The key lessons learned demonstrate that women's collective action can drive agricultural transformation, while technology adoption accelerates productivity and integrated value chain approaches ensure sustainability. This model can be adapted across regions with similar fodder challenges by focusing on local partnerships, women's leadership development, and market-responsive product diversification strategies.





Women who ensure fodder availability

© NDDB

### Next steps and opportunities

Shaktifarm FPO, having strengthened the dairy value chain, now targets broader community agricultural needs and across other dairy regions of Uttarakhand. It plans to replicate the fodder model in new areas and integrate with wider cooperative networks for greater reach. The FPO is also diversifying into vermi-compost and mushroom production, creating new income streams and promoting sustainable farming. The purchase of a pesticide-spraying drone available to rent for farmers, sees Shaktifarm evolving into a comprehensive agricultural service provider. These enterprising initiatives reflect how the collective strength of women can lay the foundation for resilient, women-led agri-businesses.

# A tribute to pioneering women in dairy

## Lydia Rabinowitsch-Kempner: A Medical Pioneer in the Fight Against Tuberculosis

Author: Tabitha Luise Hemme Kiel, Fine Artist, Project – Impressive women, Germany

At a time when women were denied access to universities and excluded from paid academic positions, Lydia Rabinowitsch-Kempner (1871–1935) laid the scientific groundwork for saving lives. Her research on the transmission of tuberculosis through milk, led to hygiene standards that remain the foundation of modern food safety – a topic as urgent as ever in a world where, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 10.6 million people contracted tuberculosis in 2022, with 1.3 million deaths.

### Early life and education

Lydia Rabinowitsch was born in 1871 in the region that is now Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire. She was raised in a Jewish family that faced significant systemic barriers. She moved to Switzerland to pursue her studies, as women were not permitted to attend university in her home country at the time. She studied natural sciences and earned her doctorate in 1894.

### Scientific beginnings

In Berlin, she became the only female, and unpaid assistant at the Robert Koch Institute (RKI). Opportunities were scarce and in 1896, she moved to the US, where she finally found the academic recognition she deserved.

In Philadelphia, US, Lydia taught and conducted research at the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. In 1898, she was appointed full professor of bacteriology.

She stayed connected to the scientific community in Germany and married Walter Kempner. The couple returned to Berlin to continue their work at the RKI.

From 1903, Rabinowitsch-Kempner worked totally unpaid for 16 years, also at the Pathological Institute of Berlin's Charité Hospital – a reminder of how women scientists were excluded from institutional roles despite their qualifications.

### The Moabit Milk War: A public health milestone

A defining chapter in her career, and a landmark in public health policy, was the so-called "Moabit Milk War." In 1904, Rabinowitsch-Kempner was commissioned by the Berlin City Council to test raw milk for the tuberculosis bacteria, a major health threat to children at the time. Her findings contradicted earlier results by Robert Koch, revealing tubercle bacilli in untreated milk supplied by the Bolle dairy company.

It was discovered that Bolle had manipulated the testing process. Rabinowitsch-Kempner exposed the fraud and filed a criminal complaint. The ensuing trial, widely covered in the press, became a clash between scientific integrity and economic power. She won the case, setting a legal and scientific precedent.

As a direct result, mandatory milk safety inspections were introduced in 1910. Only tuberculosis-free milk certified by state authorities could be sold—a regulation that still underpins milk safety today. The scandal also contributed to the global adoption of milk pasteurization.

### Recognition and later career

Despite her achievements, Rabinowitsch-Kempner never received a paid university position in Germany. In 1912, Emperor Wilhelm II awarded her the title of professor—the first woman in Berlin to receive it—but it came without a salary or university chair.



T.L. Hemme: Impressive women L. Rabinowitsch-Kempner, hand mixed acrylic paint on unique handmade recycled cotton paper A2, 42 x 59,5 cm.



In 1920, she was finally appointed director of the Bacteriological Institute at Moabit Hospital, receiving a proper salary at age 49. She continued to contribute significantly to science, founding and editing the Journal of Tuberculosis and publishing internationally on bacteriology and public health.

In 1934, just one year before her death, Rabinowitsch-Kempner was forcibly retired due to her Jewish background under the Nazi regime.

### **Tuberculosis and zoonoses: Still a global health challenge**

Rabinowitsch-Kempner's legacy is deeply relevant today. Her work on zoonotic tuberculosis – diseases – remains crucial in public health, especially in countries where food safety standards are less strictly enforced.

According to the WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2023, nearly 30 000 people contract tuberculosis every day, with over 3 500 daily deaths. Transmission from infected cattle through raw milk or aerosols continues to be a threat.



The researcher Lydia Rabinowitsch Kempner in 1918 (picture-alliance / dpa)

Her research laid the foundation for modern prevention measures, including:

- Pasteurization of milk and dairy products.
- Routine testing of cattle herds for tuberculosis.
- Exclusion of infected animals from the food chain.
- Public education on transmission risks.

Her achievements resonate today – in every pasteurized milk carton, every food safety regulation, every tuberculosis-free herd, and every life saved from preventable infection carries her imprint.

In a world still battling infectious diseases, her scientific courage remains a guiding golden light.



Milk delivery & transport around 1905.

## UNITED STATES

# Women in Blue, Empowering Female Talent Within DeLaval

## AUTHOR

Kim Smith, Monica Montalbano, Meghan Patti, Carolina Mateus, DeLaval Inc. • United States

✉ [carolina.mateus@delaval.com](mailto:carolina.mateus@delaval.com)

## The big picture

Women in Blue (WiB) provides a voice and support network for DeLaval's female employees. It supports SDG 5 by empowering women in our organization to raise meaningful issues, generate solutions that accurately fit their needs, and advance opportunities for growth and education that are relevant to the company's culture. Born within DeLaval's North American organization, WiB brings awareness to workplace issues, policy feedback to leadership, and serves as an example of community to our customers.

## The premise

The goal of WiB is to attract, develop, and retain strong female talent at DeLaval. One

Women in Blue (WiB) is an Employee Resource Group (ERG) in North America dedicated to DeLaval's advancement as a leading company in dairy - attracting, developing, and retaining strong female talent.

of the ways we achieve this is by creating a safe space with a deep sense of community where employees can identify needs and propose solutions to better support our career and personal goals.

## Getting the wheel in motion

WiB was founded as DeLaval's first Employee Resource Group (ERG) in 2015.

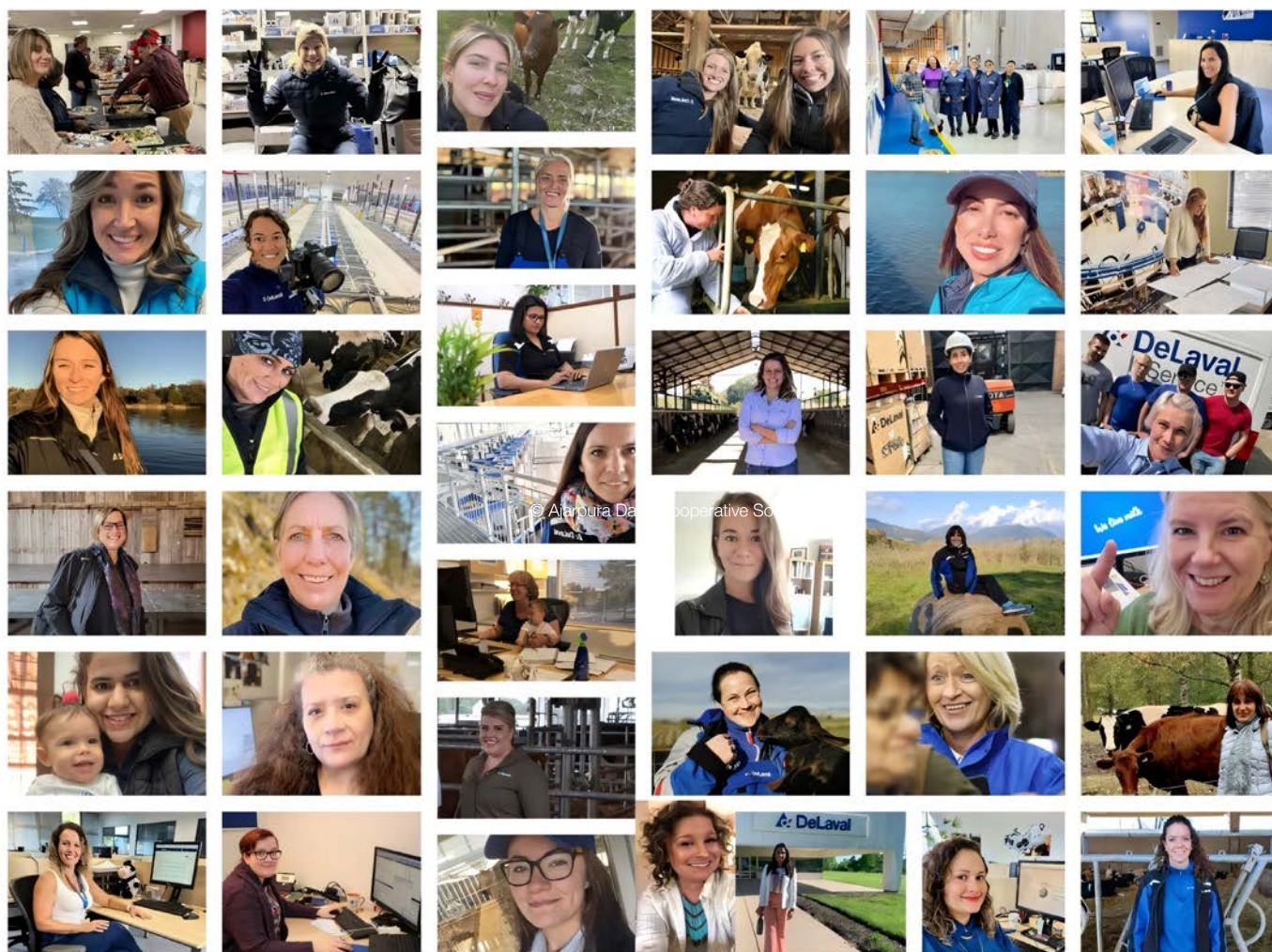
We quickly learned that leadership's vision and commitment were pivotal to our success. We developed a two-year rotating leadership system with a lead and a co-lead, where the co-lead becomes the main lead on the second year and engages a new co-lead.

Our goal to attract, develop and retain strong female talent is accomplished



Figure 1. Timeline of activities developed by Women in Blue.





**Figure 2.** Celebrating International Women's Day 2025 by sharing photos and reflections by female colleagues on what inspires them about their work or what motivated them to join the dairy industry.

through education opportunities and the creation of safe spaces where employees can identify needs, create working groups to suggest solutions, obtain support from senior leadership, and empower each other in our career and life goals.

### The history of success

Since its inception in 2015, WiB has provided our employees with multiple education opportunities, from webinars to workshops and virtual farm tours, coaching programs, book club, and discussion forums (Figure 1), where we have learned how to manage and thrive in challenging circumstances. As an ERG we have also successfully lobbied for an improved parental leave policy. This new policy was first enacted in 2019 and received further improvements in 2024.

### The value of the initiative

WiB members are strongly committed to the group's mission largely thanks to it being a grass-roots organization rather than a top-down initiative. The rotating leadership model allows for continuity, while also providing leadership opportunities and promoting fresh ideas. Another wise choice made early in our formation was to be a highly inclusive ERG; we are open to all female employees regardless of job type or location. As we became more visible in the organization, we also realized that we had to demystify our ERG. This led us to broaden inclusivity, opening our training and discussions to our male colleagues.

### Next steps and opportunities

We are currently engaged in an effort to open critical conversations with other employees, regardless of gender, with the growth of the company's culture as the primary objective.

We are also working with colleagues in Latin America to expand this initiative, and have in the past also collaborated with DAWN (Diversity at Work Network) a women-led ERG founded at DeLaval's headquarters in Sweden.

Lastly, we aim to bring more awareness of Women in Blue, and the benefits of ERGs like ours, to promote the benefits of community resources within organizations.

### More information

DeLaval celebrates 2025 International Women's Day by recognizing its strong, female talent (Figure 2). Read some of their stories here:

<https://corporate.delaval.com/2025/03/international-womens-day-2025/>

<https://corporate.delaval.com/2022/03/gender-equality-today-for-a-sustainable-tomorrow/>

<https://www.dairyherd.com/news/business/delavals-women-blue-drives-change-and-adds-inclusiveness-dairy-workplace>

<https://cowsmo.com/news/delaval-closes-the-gap-on-gender-parity/>

## MEXICO

# Good Agricultural Practices: a Project Unveiling Female Power in the Dairy Industry

## AUTHOR

Nelly Peña Haaz, Federation of Colleges and Veterinarian Associations of Mexico, C.A. • Mexico  
✉ [consultoriasplit@gmail.com](mailto:consultoriasplit@gmail.com)

## The big picture

This initiative safeguards public health by ensuring safe milk, a fundamental food for children, while advancing SDG 5 through women's leadership across the dairy value chain.

Women contribute at every stage—milking, calf-rearing, veterinary care, and production. Their impact is evident in Mexico, home to its first female President, a woman CEO of a major international dairy firm, leaders of veterinary organizations and faculties, and a student body at the national Faculty of Veterinary Medicine that is 74% female.

Our Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) project highlights this progress: a national female expert leads an equal team of five men and five women working across 87 dairy farms in “La Laguna” region in northern Mexico, the country's leading dairy basin. Their collaboration proves that gender inclusion strengthens dairy production and guarantees food safety, showing how women's participation is essential to a secure and sustainable milk supply.

## The premise

The goal was milk safety and the training of young veterinarians. At this prominent Latin American company, dairy farmers accepted the challenge of certifying 87 farms led by women.

Work was carried out on all farms, to ensure feed and water quality, medication control, equipment hygiene, and animal welfare, for the benefit of consumers.

## Getting the wheel in motion

The project began with a diagnostic assessment in 2022.



Farmers at the Mexican Association of Milk Producers Event, 2025

In 2023, ten recent Antonio Narro University graduate young veterinarians (five men and five women) were recruited, trained, and worked across 87 dairy farms to help them towards certification. Women led the GAP implementation, including the director and the auditor. By December 2024, all 87 farms were certified, and every young veterinarian was hired.

Work now continues with 30 small family farms.

## The history of success

Grupo Lala produces 22% of the total milk produced in Mexico and has certified 90% of its supply through its GAP programme. It aims to increase this figure to 100%. This ensures safer products, improved production and lower livestock disease risk, all of which ensure a healthy and safe product for consumers. Additionally, 8% of the company's milk is sourced from women-led enterprises.

## The value of the initiative

Mexican society increasingly embraces women's leadership. This project required scientific knowledge, technical expertise, and analysis to solve problems, but above all, it demanded the dedication women exemplify. With success stories like this one, we raise awareness about the capacity of women.

By doubling certified production units – a national milestone recognized by health authorities – we proved their capacity for leadership.

Recently, another company that owns the largest dairy farm in Latin America earned certification under our national expert's guidance.



### Next steps and opportunities

In 2022, we presented the project to the Federation of Veterinarians, facing skepticism about recruiting young people. Supported by a Mexican government grant, they worked diligently for a year and delivered impressive results, now showcased at regional and national forums as a model.

Food safety remains vital for public health, business, and export growth.

Though gender equity in roles, salaries, and working conditions is still a little distant, these achievements highlight women's capabilities. We are now advising the smallest farms and hope that this advisory experience, led by young Mexican women, will be replicated in other regions of the country.

#### References:

[https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/940824/Panorama\\_de\\_la\\_lecher\\_a\\_en\\_Mexico\\_2023.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/940824/Panorama_de_la_lecher_a_en_Mexico_2023.pdf)

[https://www.fmvz.unam.mx/fmvz/direccion/informes/2023/FMVZ\\_Informe-2023.pdf](https://www.fmvz.unam.mx/fmvz/direccion/informes/2023/FMVZ_Informe-2023.pdf)

**“Leading the Way:  
A Women-Led  
Initiative for National  
Milk Safety”**



Young veterinarian advising on GAP



GAP Project Closing Meeting, December 2024



Veterinarians of the La Laguna Bovine Specialists Association, March 8, 2024.

## IRELAND

# Dairy Women Ireland, a Vibrant Organisation That Connects and Empowers Women Across the Irish Dairy Sector

## AUTHOR

Mary Kinston, Ciara Lynch, Ailbhe Tyndall, Katie Gleeson, Maeve Keane, Fiona O'Donnell, Aine O'Connell, Deirdre Hynes, Laura Hannon, Mella Briscoe, Michelle McGrath, Roisin Cummins - Dairy Women Ireland • Ireland

✉ [dairywomenireland@gmail.com](mailto:dairywomenireland@gmail.com)

## The big picture

Dairy Women Ireland is a grassroots initiative that empowers and connects women across Ireland's dairy sector, addressing the historic under-representation of women in farm decision-making and leadership. By creating safe, practical spaces for knowledge-sharing, peer support, and skills development, it strengthens the role of women as equal partners in family farms and agribusiness. This directly supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by promoting women's participation, leadership, and economic empowerment in agriculture — a sector where only 13% of farm shareholders are female. Beyond individual empowerment, the initiative enhances resilience and sustainability across the dairy value chain: from farm families and advisors to processors, cooperatives, and financial institutions. By amplifying women's voices and capabilities, Dairy Women Ireland not only drives inclusivity but also fosters more innovative, balanced, and future-focused dairy systems that benefit rural communities and the wider agri-food economy.

## The premise

Dairy Women Ireland exists to empower, connect, and support women in the dairy sector by providing education, peer networks, and leadership opportunities. Its goal is to ensure women are recognised as equal decision-makers and contributors across the dairy value chain, strengthening farm families and the wider industry.

## Getting the wheel in motion

Dairy Women Ireland was established in



Alice Doyle speaking to a regional group of Dairy Women Ireland members.

2021 by a volunteer steering committee drawn from across the dairy industry. The first step was building a national network, quickly followed by regional gatherings and the inaugural national conference in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, which attracted over 160 participants. Since then, the initiative has delivered on-farm events, kitchen-table discussions, webinars, and skills workshops, supported by partnerships with organisations such as FBD Insurance, FDC Group, Kerry Dairy Ireland and Teagasc. Today, it continues to grow membership, host annual conferences, and expand its programme of local and national events, creating a strong and sustainable community of practice.

## The history of success

Since its launch in 2021, Dairy Women Ireland has built a nationwide network

of members. Regional gatherings and kitchen-table style events have created trusted spaces for peer learning, while webinars and workshops expanded access to knowledge on finance, sustainability, and farm management. Members have reported increased confidence, stronger decision-making roles within family farms, and valuable professional networks. By amplifying women's voices in dairy, the initiative has directly benefited farm families, advisors, and industry partners. The Dairy Industry has benefited by having access to a pool of talented and motivated female farmers creating a more inclusive and resilient dairy sector.

## The value of the initiative

Inspired by Dairy Women's Network in New Zealand, we created our own members' network to drive change in a traditionally





Dairy Women Ireland steering committee, 2024

© Tom Ryan



Dairy Women Ireland members winning dairy discussion support group of the year at the Irish National dairy awards, 2025.

male-dominated sector. Success has come from creating safe, authentic spaces where women share experiences, gain skills, and build confidence. Challenges such as geographic isolation and time pressures were overcome through flexible formats — from farm kitchen gatherings during school hours to evening webinars. The key lesson is that empowerment grows when women feel seen, heard, and supported. This grassroots model is adaptable and could be scaled across other agri sectors and rural communities, strengthening inclusivity and value chains.

### Next steps and opportunities

Dairy Women Ireland will continue to expand its national footprint through more regional gatherings, on-farm workshops, and annual conferences. Plans include scaling membership and strengthening collaborations with industry partners to enhance skills, leadership, and visibility for women in dairy. Digital engagement, including webinars and storytelling campaigns, will widen access and inclusion. New opportunities include deeper partnerships with processors, cooperatives,

“Led by a voluntary steering committee, Dairy Women Ireland connects and empowers women in the dairy sector through education and support. The network supports women living or working on dairy farms in Ireland, fostering peer connection, confidence, and skills development.”

and financial institutions to embed gender equality across the dairy value chain. By scaling and diversifying activities, the initiative aims to ensure women play an even stronger role in shaping the future of Irish dairy.

### More information

Dairy Women Ireland Website – <https://dairywomenireland.ie/>

Dairy Women Ireland YouTube – <https://www.youtube.com/@dairywomenireland>

Dairy Women Ireland: ‘Incredible things can happen’ – <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/news/news/dairy-women-ireland-incredible-things-can-happen-737340>

Co-ops back women in dairy with funding partnership – <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/co-ops-back-women-in-dairy-with-funding-partnership>

Women Leading the Future of Farming: FDC Group Sponsors Dairy Women Ireland – <https://www.fdc.ie/women-leading-the-future-of-farming-fdc-group-sponsors-dairy-women-ireland/>

Dairy Women Ireland holds first meeting to drive change in the industry – <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/dairy-women-ireland-holds-first-meeting-to-drive-change-in-the-industry/>

Dairy Women Ireland to hold inaugural conference – <https://www.irishexaminer.com/farming/aid-40990844.html>

New group set up for women in dairying – <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/dairy/news/new-group-set-up-for-women-in-dairying-705050>



## ZIMBABWE

# Women Moo'ving Dairy Towards Better Standards and Sustainability

## AUTHOR

Paidamoyo Chadoka, Zimbabwe Association of Dairy Farmers (ZADF) • Zimbabwe

✉ [ceo@zadf.co.zw](mailto:ceo@zadf.co.zw)

## The big picture

This initiative empowers women in the dairy sector by strengthening their ability to adopt sustainable practices, ultimately boosting national milk production. It directly supports poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, aligning with SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

By improving women's livelihoods, the initiative fosters financial independence and enhances their social standing. It also integrates women into the broader dairy value chain, promoting collaboration with key stakeholders.

Women farmers are linked to extension officers, feed suppliers, veterinary services, and providers of sustainable farming equipment—reducing operational costs and improving access to quality inputs. The initiative further facilitates partnerships with local processors, distributors, retailers, and NGOs to improve market access for women-led dairy products and provide ongoing support.

Overall, the initiative builds a supportive ecosystem that enables women to thrive in dairy farming, while contributing to sustainable agricultural development and inclusive economic growth.

## The premise

The target is to increase milk production by at least 50% among participating women farmers. It aims for equal control of productive resources, fair resource allocation, and equal participation between genders. Equality will be achieved through leveraging established women farmer's dairy network, and active lobbying for the inclusion of women.

“Helping women adopt sustainability practices for increased milk production.”

## Getting the wheel in motion

ZADF (Figure 1) provides a social network platform for women to discuss challenges affecting their production. It supports women farmers by creating market linkages with dairy value chain actors including input suppliers and markets. ZADF advocates for women in dairy by engaging regulatory bodies, Government, and the private sector to ensure a conducive operating environment for farmers. ZADF also implements projects on behalf of development agencies e.g., TRANZDVC-EU project (2021-2024) to revitalize the dairy sector. ZADF is currently implementing the Imoved Project (2024-2028), a Swedish funded project aimed at nurturing women through investment in selected agricultural value chains including dairy.

## The history of success

Women's participation in dairy production has risen to 36%, up from 23% in 2017. Milk yields per woman have increased from an average of 7 litres/cow/day in 2021 to 10 litres/cow per day in 2024. Women's access to resources has improved, with women benefitting equally from the TRANZDVC and Imoved projects. Women have equally

benefited in terms of access to production resources. Women in leadership roles within ZADF have increased, with women now making up 30% of the Board, aiming for 50% by 2028. The inclusion of women and youth is also prioritized in the Farmer of the Year competition.

## The value of the initiative

Consulting and involvement at a grassroots level has been critical for the success of ZADF projects. A multi stakeholder approach has been helpful in yielding strong business linkages. The Matching Grant Facility (through the EU) proved to be a useful tool in dairy financing, as it improves farmers' access to finance, while also measuring their commitment to the dairy sector. The multiple training sessions in fodder, dairy production, marketing, financial access etc., demonstrations and exchange visits facilitated by the project, allowed farmers to acquire new critical knowledge, attitudes, and practices to the dairy farming business.

## Next steps and opportunities

ZADF will continue to actively promote women's involvement in dairy farming through its capacity building programs (Figure 2), facilitating networking opportunities (Figure 3), and advocating for policy changes to ensure equal access to resources for women. To ease the cost of stock feed, the association will work with its partners and offer support in on-farm fodder and pasture production ranging from training, inputs and required equipment. The Association will also work on enhancing support value addition to improve farmer's incomes. Value addition will be supported at feed formulation level, as well as at processing level.





**MOO-VING DAIRY TOWARDS BETTER STANDARDS**



+263 242 251848



admin@zadf.co.zw



46 Lawson Ave,  
Milton Park,  
Harare,  
Zimbabwe

#### More information

<https://www.facebook.com/ZimbabweAssociationOfDairyFarmers/videos/women-month-celebrations-on-the-6th-of-march-2025-zadf-joined-the-nation-in-cele/4042006796028260/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGzKQmN-9WTK>

<https://www.facebook.com/newsdayzim/videos/sponsoredlets-take-a-look-at-mrs-es-ther-marwa-a-successful-dairy-farmer-from-lan/1533775643999224/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu4VhHl2-1I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R3gDTCEvuQ>

<https://www.heraldonline.co.zw/more-matabele-land-women-venture-into-dairy-farming/>

<https://www.weeffect.org/stories/charurwa-women-use-horticulture-profits-to-enter-dairy-sector/>

<https://etimes.co.zw/how-zimbabwes-women-are-transforming-the-dairy-sector/>





PAKISTAN, NIGERIA AND INDONESIA

# Lady Livestock Workers: Empowering Rural Women through Dairy Entrepreneurship

## AUTHOR

Ylona Mak, FrieslandCampina • Pakistan, Nigeria, and Indonesia

✉ [ylona.mak@frieslandcampina.com](mailto:ylona.mak@frieslandcampina.com)

## The big picture

FrieslandCampina's Women Empowerment Programme, launched in 2006, transforms rural women into active participants in the dairy value chain across Pakistan, Nigeria, and Indonesia. Traditionally excluded from formal dairy systems, despite being primary caregivers for livestock, women are now trained as Lady Livestock Workers (LLWs), milk collection entrepreneurs, and dairy extension agents. This initiative directly supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by creating leadership and income-generating opportunities for women, challenging cultural norms, and integrating women into supply chains. It also contributes to SDGs 1, 3, and 8 by reducing poverty, improving health and education outcomes, and

fostering decent work. The programme's ecosystem approach connects women to services, markets, and technology, making it a scalable model for inclusive rural development.

## The premise

To empower rural women by integrating them into the formal dairy sector through training, entrepreneurship, and leadership opportunities—enhancing their economic independence and social status.

## Getting the wheel in motion

Initiated in 2006 in Pakistan and later expanded to Nigeria and Indonesia, the programme began by training over 500

women as certified livestock extension entrepreneurs. It upscaled to train 35 000 women farmers in animal care and 300 women as milk collection agents. Female-led dairy teams and help camps provided peer-based support. ICT tools like tablets and smartphones were introduced to enhance service delivery and connect women to veterinary experts. Partnerships with UNDP, USAID, and local institutions ensured technical and financial sustainability. The programme is ongoing and continues to expand.

## The history of success

Over 800 women certified as livestock service providers now earn between 90–300 USD/month. 35 000 women farmers



## Development of Female Entrepreneurs

Linkages developed with known business concerns





trained in livestock care saw productivity gains of 1–2 litres/animal, increasing income by ~60 USD/month. 300 women became milk collection entrepreneurs, enabling direct income for farmers. The initiative improved household welfare, child nutrition, and women's decision-making power. Cultural barriers were addressed through community engagement and female-led teams.

### The value of the initiative

Success stemmed from building on women's existing roles, offering localized training, and fostering community support. Challenges like cultural resistance and limited mobility were overcome through trust-building and female-led outreach. ICT integration enhanced service delivery and connectivity. The model is adaptable to diverse contexts and scalable through partnerships. It demonstrates how gender-inclusive supply chains can transform rural economies.

“While all the past projects were focused on dairy farmers and improving their workflows and quality of life, none of them were entirely dedicated to the women farmers, who are an integral part of the supply chain.”

- Dr Rafiq, Zonal Manager Milk Procurement & Dairy Development

### Next steps and opportunities

Future plans include expanding the programme to more regions, deepening ICT integration, and strengthening partnerships with local governments and universities. There is potential to replicate the model in other agricultural sectors. New opportunities include digital livestock health platforms and micro-financing for

women entrepreneurs. The programme aims to institutionalize gender-inclusive practices across FrieslandCampina's global operations.

### More information

[Empowering women to build a better tomorrow - FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited - FrieslandCampina](#)



Neneng Rosidah, Dairy Development Frisian, Indonesia.

© FrieslandCampina

## CHINA

# Women Leading the Way: Junlebao Reshapes the Dairy Industry Chain with Scientific, Technological and Empowering Innovation

## AUTHOR

Lu Chun, Junlebao Dairy Group Co., Ltd. • China

✉ [luchun@jlbry.com](mailto:luchun@jlbry.com)

## The big picture

Since its establishment, Junlebao has prioritised protecting the rights and interests of female employees, continuously introducing innovative support mechanisms. The company fosters an equal employment environment through fair job opportunities, competitive compensation, and improved working conditions. This includes the family farm model and the application of advanced technologies that help overcome gender barriers. Junlebao also emphasizes women's perspectives in product development, launching specialized products in health management, maternal and infant nutrition, and digestive wellness - providing tailored solutions for women of all ages and occupations.

## The premise

Based on the values of fairness and respect, we have used technology to empower female positions in the organisation and break down gender barriers. We have also driven research and development from a female perspective to precisely meet diverse needs through our product innovations.

## Getting the wheel in motion

Since its inception in 1995, Junlebao worked towards an equal and inclusive culture to protect and enhance its female employees and examine its product offering for women:

- **2014 – 2016** - launched breast milk research to develop products tailored to the nutritional needs of mothers and infants.



- **In 2021** - organised health education activities for female employees.
- **In 2024** - launched the 'Food Education Campus Tour' for school milk, promoting dairy consumption among girls. (Figure 1)
- **In 2025** - launched a maternity leave subsidy programme to improve its maternity support system.

## The history of success

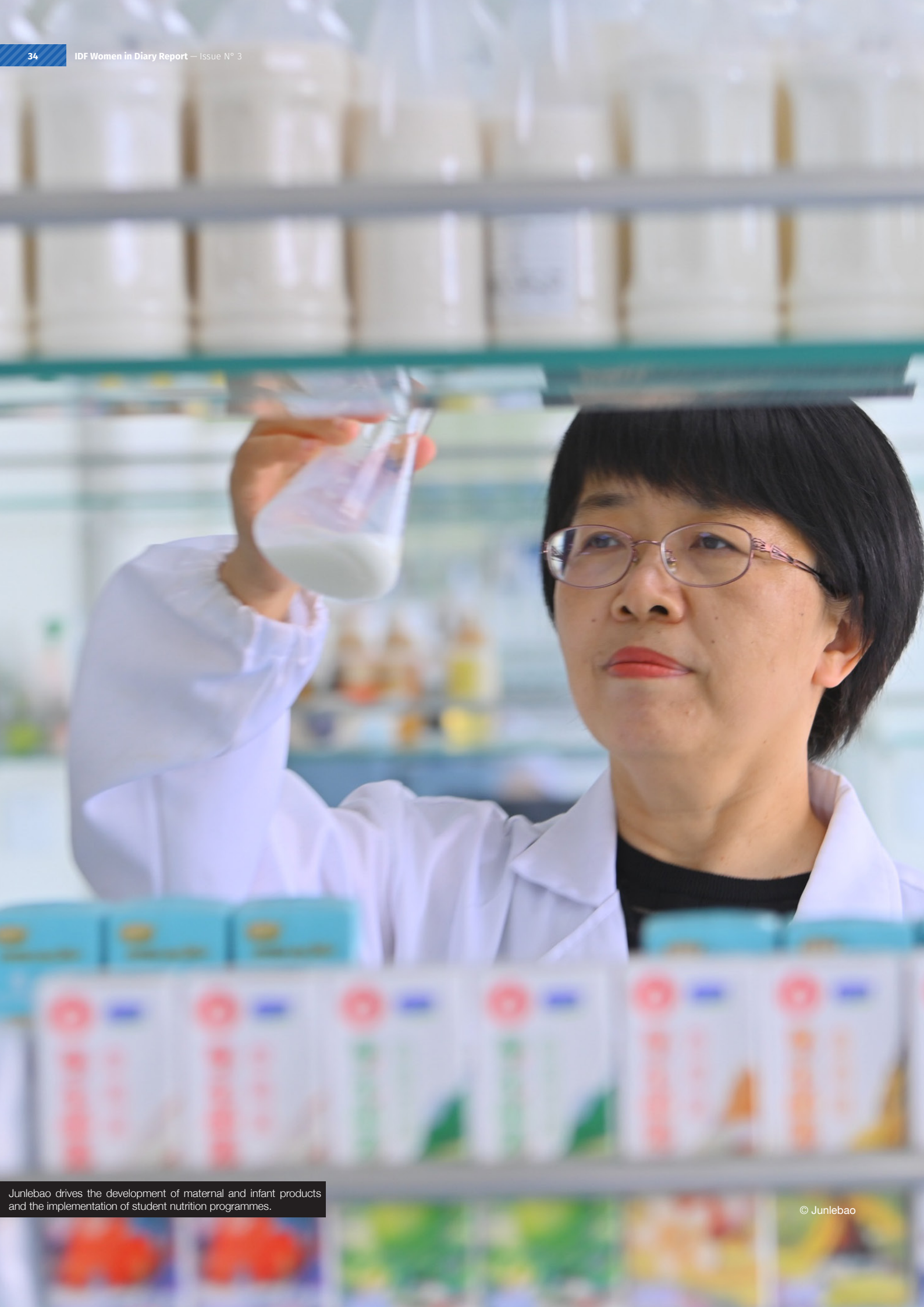
Junlebao has successfully established a multidimensional support framework for female employees:

- **Career Development:** Online platforms and training programs to enhance

professional skills (Figure 2).

- **Institutional Management:** Employee representative conferences ensure that women can participate in decision-making, and the CEO 'direct line' collects suggestions.
- **Lifestyle Care:** Infrastructure, including maternity rooms, supporting physical and mental health.
- **Product Development:** Products targeting women's health needs throughout their lifecycle (e.g., intestinal health, sugar control, high calcium) have been developed.







“Respect for women is not only running through Junlebao’s work practices, but also in its innovative targeted products.”

project for female leadership and broaden promotion channels (Figure 4). We also plan to co-operate and collaborate with medical research and public welfare institutions to provide pregnancy and childbirth health management services.

the organisation to promote sustainable development in the industry through equality mechanisms.

#### More information

<https://www.junlebaoruye.com/>

Other plans include the analysis of the development data of female employees in

### The value of the initiative

Junlebao strongly champions women's empowerment and equal career opportunities, fostering innovation in maternal and infant products and student nutrition programmes to support girls' healthy growth (Figure 3). Supporting campus public welfare initiatives for student milk has helped to ensure girls' education and assist in our aim to fulfil our social responsibility to girls and women. Regular feedback mechanisms in the organisation fully unleash the development potential of women.

### Next steps and opportunities

In the near future, Junlebao plans to conduct a detailed survey on the health needs of girls' milk sources and then to customize scientific nutrition plans. This will help to promote the empowerment







Dairy farmer taking care of the cattle.



## INDIA

# Tryst with Empowerment - A Story of Transformation through Women-led Dairying in India

## AUTHOR

Meenesh Shah, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) Dairy Services (NDS) • India

✉ [aditya@nddb.coop](mailto:aditya@nddb.coop)

## The big picture

NDS challenges the established social fabric in rural India, where women often are excluded from economics and decision-making, despite being the backbone of India's dairy sector. The establishment of Milk Producer Organisations (MPOs) (a form of producer owned enterprise) supports the SDG 5, empowering women to be part of the mainstream economy, and providing a transparent, sustainable, direct income. Women transition from unpaid contributors to recognised producers and decision-makers. This instils confidence in the women, reshapes gender dynamics and helps realize their self-worth. We train women in using digital tools for governance, data analysis, and decision-making at the Board level. Across the dairy value chain, we ensure that women are active drivers of rural transformation. To date we have helped incorporate 23 MPOs across India of which:

- 16 are entirely owned by women dairy farmers
- 18 are led by women chairpersons

...empowering over a million women in the remotest regions of India.

## The premise

NDS *raison d'être* is to empower small and marginal dairy farmers, especially women, by facilitating the setting up of MPOs that ensure transparent payments, enabling sustainable sources of income, and financial self-reliance. These MPOs drive community transformation building a space where women lead, shape, and thrive in the dairy sector.

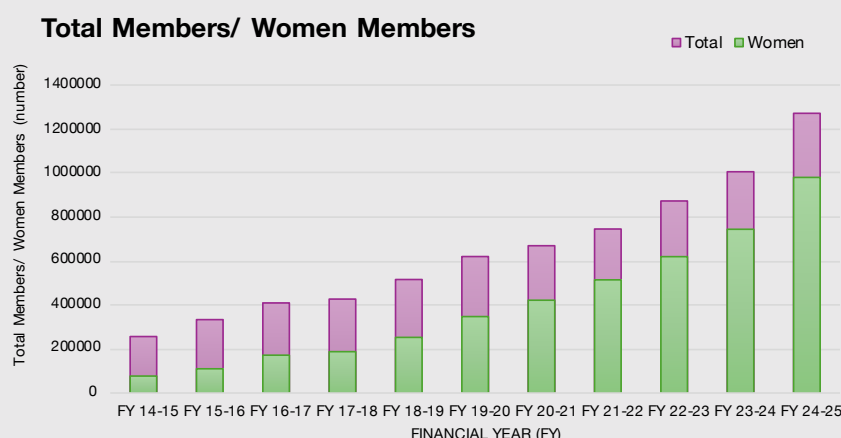


Figure 1. Total members and women over the past 10 years. Credit of NDDB Dairy Services.

## Getting the wheel in motion

When NDS launched in 2009, rural dairies were largely male-led. But whenever women managed Milk Pooling Points, maintained hygiene, or chaired Boards, milk quality, efficiency, and profits rose. Seeing this, NDS intentionally put women at the heart of the dairy chain, starting all-women MPOs to challenge norms and foster leadership (Figure 1). We also offered artificial insemination, vaccination drives, and high-genetic-merit animals to boost productivity.

## The history of success

Since inception, we've engaged over a million women dairy farmers in India's most underserved regions. This year, 150 000 women became 'Lakhpati Didis' (lakhpati hindi word meaning millionaire, didi means sister). They have their own bank accounts

where milk payouts are directly credited. They have contributed a share capital of ₹1180 million and a turnover of ₹42 930 million. Beyond income, our interventions have built confidence, decision-making power and community recognition. They are now the leaders who have a say in their families, shape households, manage major expenses, lead a future where they are the role models for their communities.

## The value of the initiative

NDS has significantly contributed to women empowerment in India's dairy ecosystem by providing platforms for leadership, skill development, and knowledge sharing. Women hold key positions in MPOs, making strategic decisions that have uplifted their socio-economic status. The greatest challenge was overcoming the deep-rooted social norms in rural India - addressed by developing trust, ownership, and collective



growth. Enabling a transparent and fair milk payment mechanism increased household incomes, enabling families to access better nutrition, education, and overall development. This model demonstrates how empowering women as leaders transforms families, but also strengthens entire rural communities, making it highly adaptable and scalable.

### Next steps and opportunities

India is using its 230 million bovines to turn waste into wealth by installing biogas units that convert dung into free cooking gas and organic manure, directly easing household burdens.

Small farms often need to grow food crops instead of fodder, making food scarce and expensive in the summer, significantly impacting farmer returns and animal health. To counter this, we helped establish 12 Fodder Plus FPOs supplying quality fodder more reliably, boosting livestock health,

“At NDS, milk is not just a commodity, it is a vehicle of transformation. Where women are not only included but are central to all our initiatives, they do not just pour milk, they pour possibilities. They are the changemakers, driving governance, shaping policies, and empowering communities through dairying.”

and incomes. These collectives act as local businesses while linking new value chains to traditional cropping patterns, helping small producers diversify earnings and strengthen household and rural resilience.

### More information

<https://www.nddbdairyservices.com/>



Member group meeting.

© NDDB Dairy Services



Breed improvement interventions at farmer's doorstep.



## **Helping nourish the world with safe and sustainable dairy**

The IDF is the leading source of scientific and technical expertise for all stakeholders of the dairy chain. Since 1903, IDF has provided a mechanism for the dairy sector to reach global consensus on how to help feed the world with safe and sustainable dairy products.

A recognized international authority in the development of science-based standards for the dairy sector, IDF has an important role to play in ensuring the right policies, standards, practices and regulations are in place to ensure the world's dairy products are safe and sustainable.



### **International Dairy Federation**


70/B, Boulevard Auguste Reyers

1030 Brussels - Belgium

Tel: +32 2 325 67 40

Email: [info@fil-idf.org](mailto:info@fil-idf.org)

 @FIL\_IDF

 International-dairy-federation

 <https://bsky.app/profile/fil-idf.bsky.social>

 [www.fil-idf.org](http://www.fil-idf.org)