

KAMPALA MILK SUPPLIES

CHANGES IN THE PATTERN OF MILK SUPPLY TO
KAMPALA

For many years the chief source of fresh milk for Kampala has been Kenya. That country at present exports to Uganda an average of 10,000 gallons of milk per day, of which about 8,000 gallons are sold in Kampala. This milk is produced on farms in the Western Highlands of Kenya, where the cattle are entirely exotic, the main breeds being Ayrshires, Guernseys, Jerseys and Friesians. The milk is collected and processed by the Kenya Co-operative Creameries, and transported to Uganda by rail. Some milk is unloaded at stations between the Kenya border and Kampala, but most arrives in Kampala where it is distributed to retail dairies by the Uganda Creameries.

Fresh milk has had to be imported from Kenya because although Uganda has large herds of indigenous cattle, their milk yield is very low. Furthermore experiment has shown that these cattle cannot be improved sufficiently for a large increase of yield. Uganda's production has therefore been inadequate to satisfy its expanding market. Although this movement of milk from one country to another has been remarkably efficient, it seems unwise for one state to depend on another for the supply of such a vital foodstuff. Besides, Uganda is seeking ways of diversifying its economy. In view of this, since 1961 the Uganda Government has encouraged the importation of exotic cattle which could be obtained from European farmers leaving Kenya. In the last four years at least 7,000 exotic cattle have been imported into Uganda, and most of them have been bought by individual farmers in Buganda.

The keeping of these exotic cattle has not been easy, for they need a lot more than indigenous animals. For example, they are susceptible to tick-borne diseases and have to be regularly sprayed with anti-tick drugs. They must also be fenced to stop other cattle from bringing ticks near them. The exotic cattle also suffer from heat, so shade must be provided. The most difficult problem is for the farmers to obtain supplementary feed for the cattle, which seems to be a necessity for their well-being. Although the feed can be made from such local products as maize, cotton seed cake, maize, groundnuts and millets, it is very expensive for a small-scale farmer. Another problem which has confronted farmers is to have enough land for the exotic cattle. It is obvious therefore that not every farmer who wishes can buy these cattle: he must be an able farmer with enough land, and with capital to maintain the animals until they are productive.

The introduction of exotic cattle into Uganda has meant that much more milk is produced locally. Whereas an indigenous cow produces about 250 gallons of milk in one lactation, an exotic cow can produce up to 800 gallons per lactation. With the anticipation of a large flow of fresh milk within Buganda, the Uganda Creameries set up a pasteurising plant in Kampala, capable of processing 600 gallons of milk a day. The Uganda Creameries was to buy the milk from the farmers, pasteurise it and then put it on the market together with the milk imported from Kenya. For a long time however milk did not flow into the plant as expected, so that only 300 gallons of milk a day were processed. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, farmers tried to sell their milk straight to consumers or to milk vendors because they obtained as much as 80 cents per pint compared with the Uganda Creameries price of 40 cents. Secondly, many farmers living far from Kampala found it difficult to transport their milk to Kampala before it went bad. In the past, milk was carried to Kampala on bicycles by vendors. These milk vendors still carry on today, but more milk is produced than they can carry.

As the number of exotic cattle increased the milk production increased to such an extent that the market near the farms was satisfied and something had to be done to help farmers to get their milk to the pasteurising plant in Kampala. In March 1966, the Uganda Government, with the help of a loan from UNICEF, set up milk collecting and cooling centres in areas where much milk is produced. The inflow of milk to the pasteurising plant then increased substantially, and a new plant capable of handling 2,000 gallons of milk a day was set up. This plant already handles about 500 gallons of local milk a day.

In order to minimise further the marketing problem it is proposed that there should be large farms run by a co-operative of farmers, or state farms, which can buy the milk from the smaller farms and add this to their own for sale in urban centres. Some unions already exist which together produce over 100 gallons of milk per day.

The aim of the Uganda Government and the milk producers in Uganda is to make the country self-sufficient in fresh milk as soon as possible. Already there are no more cattle for sale from Kenya, but there are plans for both Central and Local Government to set up breeding centres for exotic cattle. Considering the amount of Kenya milk consumed in Kampala and other urban centres there is scope for a greatly expanded dairy industry. It has been proved by experience and experiment that physical conditions in Buganda are suitable for exotic cattle. There is plenty of natural pasture and local material for producing supplementary feed is available. The Uganda milk has been proved to contain a lot of cream, therefore should there be more milk than can be consumed fresh, other dairy products could be produced.

In the past few years the pattern of the supply of fresh milk for Kampala has certainly been changing. The change is not as rapid as the people who are instigating it would like, and the Kenya milk has still a very important part to play. Yet the change has begun, and a time can be envisaged when Kampala will be supplied with fresh milk chiefly from local sources.

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