



Reviving the Dairy Industry in Malawi



Photo: Melissa AberleGrasse

Mrs. Ibrahim of Dedza, Malawi demonstrates the success of dairy farming.

Eighty-five percent of Malawi's population live in rural areas with the majority farming on less than one hectare of land. Dairy farming, a locally viable and lucrative industry, had stagnated in Malawi in recent decades. A government surtax limited the profits, and for many poor farmers, purchasing a cow was impossible.

Beginning in 1999, USAID began reviving the local dairy industry in Malawi through training and in-kind loans to farmers. New dairy farmers are trained in basic skills such as animal husbandry and record keeping. A special loan program provides a pregnant cow to a farmer, who in turn passes on the cow's young to another program member. Local associations of at least seventy-five farmers share a milk cooling center, where farmers deliver their milk -- by foot or bicycle -- to be picked up daily by a milk processing company.

USAID's dairy program now has 6,000 member farmers in Malawi and reaches all three regions of the country - approximately 50% of the members are women. The program's dairy farmers earn on average of \$600 per year from their milk sales, compared to the per capita income in Malawi of only \$180. National advocacy helped eliminate the government surtax on farmers' income from milk sales. USAID expects to add thousands of dairy farmers each year to the growing dairy industry in Malawi.

Photo & Caption