

***Joint GDP/IDF Statement
UN Food Systems Summit
March 2021***

The United Nations Food Systems Summit, which is being convened this September by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, marks a clear point in time when strong recommendations will be made regarding the future production and consumption of food. With the world nowhere close to delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the target date of 2030, the Summit Secretariat has issued a call for game changing solutions to pick up the pace to deliver the SDGs.

The global dairy sector has been sharing information on the contribution of dairy to healthy and sustainable diets throughout the preparatory stage of the Summit both at the global and national levels. We are asking the Summit Secretariat and nation states to consider game changer solutions that would maximize the value of animal agriculture to economies, diets, and the environment while creating greater opportunities for women and youth.

The global dairy sector is committed to nourishing the global population with safe and nutritious foods through sustainable production systems. This commitment is expressed in the [Dairy Declaration of Rotterdam](#) signed in 2016 between the IDF and the FAO. Dairy contributes to several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly to Zero Hunger, Alleviation of Poverty, and Gender Equality.

Dairy is a staple food with traditions deeply woven into societies all around the world. Billions of people worldwide rely on dairy for nutrition daily. Dairy products are naturally nutrient dense foods, supplying significant amounts of high-quality protein and micronutrients, including calcium, magnesium, selenium, riboflavin, and vitamins B5 and B12. [Strong scientific evidence](#) supports the critical role of milk and dairy foods in global nutrition and health. Although dairy provides important nutrition through the life course, it is particularly important for nourishing children, and at least [160 million children around the world](#) currently receive and benefit from dedicated school milk programs.

The versatility and affordability of milk and dairy products allows for varied use and incorporation into most dietary patterns and across different cultures around the world. In countries where high-quality protein sources are scarce for vulnerable populations, dairy is an affordable nutrient dense food, and plays a vital role in making high-quality nutrition accessible. As well as providing first class nutrition, dairy provides jobs and economic security for many families and communities.

An overly simplistic view of plant- versus animal-sourced foods may have unintended consequences for human health. Animal and plant-foods should not be thought of as competing entities, but rather as [synergistic food sources](#) that provide different though complementary nutritional, social, economic, and environmental benefits.

There are approximately 133 million dairy farms around the world and 98% of those, whether small, medium, or large, are family owned. Dairy farmers care for their animals and the land. Dairying provides a daily income source which helps lift individuals out of poverty and provides benefits like greater access to

education to rural families.

Dairying is one of the most consistent and robust sources of livelihoods for rural people. Any discussion on dairying, especially its impact on environmental and related animal welfare concerns needs to take this into account, as well as its important role in nutrition.

Resilience of the dairy sector was once again demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic when it remained the only sustainable source of income for some low income and rural populations in many parts of the world, at a time when many other economic activities being forced to shut down.

Women are increasingly playing important roles in dairying activities. This has a positive impact on women's empowerment and consequent long term and larger impact on the well-being of the society. Thirty-seven million farms are led by women and 80 million women are employed in the dairy sector.

Through its dynamic nature and forward thinking the sector will be able to continue to innovate to reduce its environmental impact and be part of the solution to tackling climate change. Burgeoning good practices and technologies are enabling the livestock industry to lower GHG emissions from field to fork, and progress will accelerate even further in the coming years. This is exemplified in the Net Zero, Pathways to Low Carbon Dairy Initiative. It should be noted that dairy emission intensity over the last 10 years [has reduced by 11%](#).

Positive contributions of dairy on the environment should be taken into consideration. For example, approximately 70 percent of agricultural land is regarded as marginal land that becomes [part of a productive](#) food system when it is grazed by cattle and other animals. Moreover, 86% of global livestock feed is not human edible. Dairy cattle upgrade inedible plants, and industry by-products into high quality protein for people. Dairy also provides raw material for renewable energy (manure), thus contributing to the renewable energy transition.

Dairy is a vibrant and adaptive sector which functions around the world despite cultural and geographical differences. The sector has a strong knowledge transfer culture promoting best practice and learning to foster improvement, efficiency, and resilience. For example, [IDF Guide on Good Animal Welfare in Dairy Production 2.0](#) published with the FAO and OIE support.

Dairy contributes to nutrition security. Trade in dairy products contribute as well to food security. The dairy sector supports and contributes to science-based international standards development and implementation, advancing food safety and responsible animal care.

For these reasons, the global dairy sector is actively engaging in the Food Systems discussions. The International Dairy Federation and the Global Dairy Platform and their members are contributing to the preparation of the UN Food Systems Summit and proposed game changing solutions in all of the Action Tracks such as [School Milk Programs](#); [Dairy Sustainability Framework](#); Net Zero, Pathways to Low Carbon Dairy; [Dairy Nourishes Africa](#). We will continue to participate in global, regional and national dialogues sharing numerous examples of [ongoing sustainable](#) activities and commitments in the dairy sector.

There is no one size fits all diet or one single way to limit our impacts on the environment and protect our planet. There are multiple choices and actions. Through the Food Systems Summit, our sector will have a valuable opportunity to increase understanding of the significant contribution it makes to food security.

Dairy is part of the solution!