



Press release: For immediate release

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE DAIRY INDUSTRY **3 April 2020**

There have been dramatic changes in our country over the past few days as a result of the COVID-19 virus infection. The virus bears a very close genetic relationship to the corona virus that was responsible for the SARS pandemic of 2003, which also started in China. COVID-19 is the third corona virus that has been transmitted to humans from its original animal host. It is highly virulent and is capable of making people seriously ill.

What is happening in the dairy industry during the lockdown period?

The Milk Producers' Organisation (MPO) supports the drastic measures announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The MPO is attached to the technical task team appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, with subcommittees for economics, social impact, and communication. These committees function virtually and the role of the MPO is to promote the interests of milk producers at all times.

The 21-day lockdown has meant a considerable loss of personal freedom for all of us, and one basic aspect, namely our need for food, is being widely discussed. Millions of people are dependent on milk and milk products as part of their daily diet because milk supplies energy, protein, and many vitamins and minerals in a single product. In addition to the nutritional value of milk and milk products, the dairy industry provides employment for many people and consequently economic security for many families.

South Africans can rest assured that our milk farmers and milk processors are working ceaselessly even in these very difficult circumstances to meet the country's need for dairy products. Securing the food supply is seen as a critical service that is needed to support the health and safety of our citizens and for this reason milk production and processing will continue even during the 21-day lockdown.

Production-related services such as veterinary services, the supply of pesticides and veterinary remedies, and the provision of feed and water, will also continue. In view of the restrictions on people's movements, the demand for milk may possibly drop. To avoid this, the MPO is appealing to retailers to reduce the price of milk products on their shelves to make milk and milk products affordable for everyone during this extremely challenging period.

What action should milk producers take on their farms?

Sound individual self-regulation on every farm is the main requirement. Contact with people outside the farm gate should be kept to a minimum and wherever possible the workforce should be scaled down to the indispensable minimum. Masks, gloves, and sanitisers should be provided as well. Further, the public can rest assured that the virus cannot be transmitted by pasteurised milk. South Africa can be confident that agricultural activities will carry on and that the milk industry will do everything in our power to continue to supply a quality product.

Rely on dairy – we'll get through this crisis together!

Issued by the MPO

2de Vloer, Katoen SA Gebou / 2nd Floor, Cotton SA Building, Watermeyerstraat 86 / 86 Watermeyer Street, Val de Grace, Pretoria 0184;
Posbus 1284 / PO Box 1284, Pretoria 0001, RSA Tel: +27 (0) 12 843 5600 Faks / Fax: +27 (0) 12 804 4811 ;
E-pos / E-mail: barbara@mpo.co.za/info@mpo.co.za

Direkteure / Directors
C Wellbeloved (Nasionale Voorsitter/National Chairman), Z Gebeda Onder-voorsitter/Vice Chairman), H Cilliers, D Dickson, S Ferreira,
S Garland, B Green, H Nel, HJ Pretorius, Dr CJ van Dijk, B van Greunen,

Follow #MilkMpo on Twitter and @MilkProducersSA on Facebook, or visit mpo.co.za for more information.