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## Transforming Lives through Improved Dairy Farming

Improved dairy practices transform one woman's small-scale dairy unit into a model farm.



Photo: USAID/Kenya

*Evelyn Biwott, a smallholder dairy farmer in Uasin Gishu County, embraced improved dairy practices and has since doubled her household income while improving her family's nutrition.*

***“Our lives have totally changed as a result of increased milk production.”***

*— Evelyn Biwott,  
Small-holder Dairy Farmer*

**Telling Our Story**  
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Evelyn Biwott's two dairy cows on her one-acre farm in Kenya barely produced enough milk for what her family needed at home and for feeding the calf. Since maize stalks from plantations were not enough to feed their dairy cows, Biwott and other women dairy farmers in the area travelled long distances to fetch wild grass in the forest.

USAID's Kenya Agriculture Value Chain Enterprises (KAVES) activity identified challenges that most of these women farmers were facing. Among the challenges were: low-quality feed and feeding practices, poor health management, improper housing structures (especially for the calves, which were dying or emaciated) and very low conception rates due to poor nutrition.

Through USAID support, thirteen women and five youth formed the Cheptaba Dairy Group and received training on dairy feed production and conservation, formulation of the total mixed ratio to ensure proper nutrition and other extension services vital to boosting milk production. In three months, the members were realizing significant benefits from dairy farming.

“Our lives have totally changed as a result of increased milk production. My family now consumes 3 liters of milk per day, up from 2 liters and this has greatly improved nutrition,” explained Biwott.

Her dairy cows used to produce 14 liters daily, but this has increased to 24 liters daily. Since fresh milk in the area retails for 35 Kenya Shillings (Ksh), her sales increased from 490 Ksh to 840 Ksh per day. As a result, Evelyn's household income has almost doubled.

Biwott, now a champion of the group, is making silage from maize and has sourced for hay bales to make dairy feed, thus reducing production costs. She has also leased three more acres to plant maize for silage production and “Boma Rhodes” grass.

With increased income, Biwott plans to acquire two more high-breed dairy cows. Her small-scale dairy farm is now a popular destination for enthusiastic upcoming dairy farmers.

Cheptaba Dairy Group members are set to start producing value added milk products to boost their incomes. KAVES, in collaboration with the Kenya Dairy Board, will train the smallholder dairy farmers on value addition. Through another partner in the activity, Heritage Insurance, the farmers are also planning to insure their dairy cows, which will enable them to use the insured cows as security to access bank credit to purchase farming equipment.

Almost half of the farmers USAID works with are female. USAID is helping them adopt new methods of farming that contribute to higher incomes.