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ILRI and Kenya Dairy Board sign agreement to transform dairy sector

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The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Kenya Dairy Board (KDB) have signed a five-year memorandum of understanding to strengthen their existing collaboration and explore complementary research, institutional development, and capacity-building opportunities aimed at transforming Kenyaâ??s dairy sector for the benefit of millions of farmers, business operators, and consumers.

The Kenya dairy sector is the largest in East Africa, contributing approximately 4 per cent to the national GDP and 14 per cent of the agricultural GDP. It is the largest sub-sector within Kenyan agriculture, providing livelihoods for about 1.8 million households and creating over 700,000 jobs. Smallholder dairy farmers are a central component of the sector, producing the majority of the country's milk.

At the signing ceremony held at the ILRI Nairobi campus, the senior leadership of the two organisations expressed their commitment to the renewed partnership that will bridge research and regulation by working at a systems levelâ??from farm to glassâ??to improve dairy production, processing, market access, and consumer awareness.

The ILRI director general, Appolinaire Djikeng, said: â??As the International Livestock Research Institute, we are really excited to be in this partnership with the Kenya Dairy Board to support the transformation of the agricultural sector in Kenya and to bring the research evidence to support that transformation.â?•

He noted that the dairy sector in Kenya has great potential, with opportunities for improvement in the areas of animal health, genetics, and milk safety, as well as sustainability in the face of climate change.

â??The dairy sector is the heartbeat of rural livelihoods,â?• said William Kimutai Maritim, acting managing director, KDB.

He added: â??Through this partnership, we hope to see the informal dairy sector transform into a more formal structure for increased production and value addition.â?•

Key strategic areas of the partnership include
â?¢ strengthening dairy food systems to assure milk quality and safety;
â?¢ developing institutional and laboratory capacity to improve the quality and safety of milk and dairy products; and
â?¢ communicating knowledge and evidence to improve policy and regulatory practice.