

Dairy board requires 15bn/- for school milk programme



The Registrar of the Tanzania Dairy Board, Dr George Msalya (standing), speaks at the milk stakeholders meeting tallored to develop an action plan for the Implementation of School Milk Programme in Tanzania (2023-2028). Photo: Correspondent Valentine Oforo, Dodoma.

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo, Dodoma

THE Tanzania Dairy Board (TDB) needs around 15bn/- to provide milk to schools through School Milk programme (SMP), in the next five year.

TDB registrar Dr George Msalya told The Guardian that the program is expected to commence mid this year and will benefit 500 schools across the country.

"Numerous records prove that in Tanzania school milk feeding programs started way back in early 2000s, and has involved different models (ways of implementation), and has reached a peak of 125 schools and 99,000 children in the recent past. But despite the efforts, the vital program been limited in terms of coverage, access of dairy products to school children, involvement of stakeholders," he said.

It is hoped that the program

will cover the whole country, starting with the schools in the areas where milk is available and the presence of dairy processing factories, according to Msalya.

He noted that the programme will start with at least 100 schools in 2023/2024, while other 100 schools will be added every year for the five consecutive years. The number of schools covered is expected to increase from 125 to 625 schools by 2027, targeting pupils and students aged between 4 to 19 years.

The distributed milk will be processed, either pasteurized, UHT, cultured milk or yoghurt depending on the availability and infrastructure of the area.

"The quantity of milk supplied will be 150mls to 200mls, whereby parents are encouraged to contribute money for the purchase of milk for their children to be taken during the break time," he said.

Currently, TDB in cooperation

with the ministry of livestock and fisheries, and other stakeholders are jointly bridging efforts to compile the special Action Plan for Implementation of School Milk Program, 2023-2028.

Among others, the main focus behind drafting of the Action Plan is to further enhance the implementation of a sustainable school milk program.

"We have now decided to team up and draft a specific Action Plan for the execution of the helpful program with an eye to ensure its sustainability. Among others, the plan involves seven specific objectives that have been well arranged and will be useful in implementation of the plan and to respond to the main objectives," Dr. Msalya added.

He detailed, among the seven specific objectives incorporates a move to enhance and strengthen participation of parents and other stakeholders in the program, to determine context spe-

cific modalities for implementation of the program, to identify mechanisms for coordination and collaboration of sustainably implementation of the school program.

Other specific objectives are to provide standards and qualities for milk and others dairy products to be supplied in schools, to improve collection, access, and sharing of data on the program among key stakeholders.

The action plan also targets to review and facilitate implementation of policy program in order to improve capacity of schools nutrition committees and local supervision of the program as well as to conduct monitoring and evaluation of the program.

Dr. Msalya insisted that the program, SMP, was of paramount importance as it helps families support their children's education while protecting their food security as a way also to break the intergenerational cycle of hunger and poverty that affects vulnerable families and communities.

"Implementation of this program plays a meaningful role to help spur school enrolment and reduce absenteeism whereby once the children are in schools, the program can also contribute to their learning through avoiding hunger and expanding their cognitive abilities," Dr. Msalya observed.

To ensure for sustainability of the country-wide program, the Registrar informed that the parent ministry and the dairy board planned every financial year to construct 10 Milk Collection Centers (MCCs) and establish eight selling points to facilitate easy distribution of milk to schoolchildren.

Evidence from the Tanzania National School Malaria and Nutrition Survey (SMNS) of 2019 indicates that on average, children from public primary schools consumed limited diversified meals with animal source food being the least consumed food groups by majority of school children.