



**Cameroon: Small-scale Dairy Cattle Farming;
Heifer's Assistance Raises Incomes By 50 Per cent**

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Hundreds of dairy cattle farmers from West and North West regions received support of FCFA 852 million in 5 years [FCFA 656 = 1 Euro]. More than 200 families from the North West and West regions whose dairy cattle farming activities are supported by the charity, Heifer Project International, Cameroon, have seen their annual household incomes increased by at least 50 per cent in 5 years. According to a recent evaluation report of the impact of Heifer's Smallholder Dairy Development Programme for the period July 2004 to December 2009, all of the 404 supported farmers realized a cumulative gross income of FCFA 456,822,600 from project activities.

From this amount, they were able to save a cumulative sum of more than FCFA 76 million - money that has been spent in acquiring additional household furniture/assets, farm tools and inputs, farmland, motorcycles as well as constructing new homes. The report says noticeable and measurable progress was made in supported families' income, nutrition, health, education and housing conditions; all contributing to improved living standards for the families.

The significant rise in incomes of supported farmers has also been attributed to increased production of milk by their dairy cows from an average of 13 litres a day for first lactation (or delivery) in 2004 to an average of 16 litres a day for third lactation in 2009 because of proper animal management. The project has also brought about the social and economic empowerment of women farmers and improved gender relations in supported households. "A total of 167 women now own dairy cattle as direct project partners and support their husbands in buying basic household needs," notes the report. Out of this number, 61 occupy leadership positions in dairy cooperatives, Common Initiative Groups and other community groups.

Some of the project spread effects include the setting up of two private dairy processing plants in the North West Region, private individuals and institutions also going into dairy development, the building of capacity of both Cameroonian and foreign students, and inspiration by government to initiate a national dairy development programme.

Heifer Project International, Cameroon's Smallholder Dairy Development Programme, began in 1995. Several shipments of purebred Holstein-Friesian dairy cattle have since been imported from Ireland, Kenya and South Africa and distributed to supported farmers in the North West and West regions where the animals are managed under zero-grazing conditions (kept and fed in stables). Heifer's integrated animal-agricultural activities presently cover 6 of Cameroon's 10 regions.