

School Milk Programme in Thailand

By Dr. Issara Suwanabol

History of the School Milk Programme in Thailand



The establishment of the National Milk Drinking Campaign Board (NMDCB) by the Cabinet decision in 1985 stems from the farmers protests of 1984 on unsold milk. A pilot programme was implemented in selected areas of Bangkok and Chiangmai for parents to purchase milk at 25% less the normal priced milk through monthly coupons for their children in Primary and Kindergarten schools. This programme was the origin of the national School Milk Programme of Thailand. Over the years, the programme was

later expanded and today all school children in public schools are provided with 200ml of free milk.

School Milk in the Thai Context

The principle objective of the National School Milk Programme is to support the Thai dairy industry, by providing an outlet for locally produced milk. By providing milk to the young at an early stage, will also through time developed a taste for milk and hence a market for the future. Statistic has shown that while the milk per capita milk consumption of Thailand was a low of 2 litres in 1984, a year, but risen to as a high of 23 litres in 2002. The dairy market has also raised from a 290 million litres a year business in the early 90's to an 1146 million litres market by 2003. Local herd size has growth from 132,000 in 1989 to 412,000 in 2003.



School Milk is a vital part of the Thai dairy market, so much so that it accounts for more than 30% of the total liquid milk market. As a result school milk days has been expanded from the 200 days school calendar to 230 feeding days, with an extra 30 days of milk for consumption in the holidays. Milk is distributed in long life (UHT) packs for parents to pick up from schools.

Today, the operation of the Thai school milk is carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Bureau. As per the cabinet consensus in 2003, only plain milk in both UHT and pasteurised format are provided. For administration purposes, the whole country is divided into three-school milk zone, labeled as zone, 1,2 and 3. The principle is that the consumers and the suppliers of milk must be within the same zone, such that raw milk in zone 1 must be processed by a dairy in zone 1 and be consumed by schools in zone1. This zoning is to provide a balance of supply and demand and support a more equal allocation of resource. Dairy wishing to be a school milk supplier by first be certified by

the Ministry of Industry, in possession of a valid food safety certificate from the Thai FDA and have a long term contract to buy local raw milk. All school milk must be made from liquid raw milk and not from powder. By 2004 all school milk supplier must be HACCP certified. The bureau of budget controls the school milk budget and the whole thing is then reporting to the National Milk Policy Committee under the office of the Prime Minister.



Conclusion

The success of school milk in Thailand stems is not just measured in terms of nutritional benefits, a subject I have touch on in previous International FAO sponsored school milk conferences. The economic benefits and the support in national development is less known. Without school milk to provide a stable platform by which to support the growth of the Thai dairy industry, the Thai dairy will definitely not have experience such growth.