



John Wahome

John is a milk producer.

John Njogu Wahome is earning a decent income as a dairy farmer for the first time in almost a decade. Not so long ago a desperate Wahome fed fresh milk to the neighbourhood dogs. "Processors told us our milk was bad. What could we do? We gave it to the dogs," he says.

It's been a difficult few years for the Kenyan dairy industry. Cheap powdered milk imports glutted the market in the late 1990s and in 2001, putting local dairy farmers out of business.

Following protests from some farmers the Kenyan government increased tariffs on imported milk products limiting the flood of imports. This along with some internal restructuring has allowed the dairy industry to regain some muscle.

Despite the set-backs it's faced, Kenya has one of the most developed dairy sectors in Africa. Kenyan dairy farmers are keen to see their sector grow and improve but fear that further liberalisation will simply destroy it. And the statistics make for grim reading. Since liberalisation Kenya is slowly moving from being almost self-sufficient in dairy production to become a net importer of milk.

"When we got into this free market, that was madness," Wahome says, "it hasn't helped me or any farmer of Kenya."