

Business Standard

Amul plans to market camel milk

Dairy in Kutch to start processing milk, subject to central food standards body's nod; Gujarat government has already allocated funds; issues include creating a market

[Vimukt Dave](#) & [Sohini Das](#) | Ahmedabad

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Soon, [Amul camel milk](#) might arrive on your breakfast table. Subject to a nod from the Food Safety and Standards Association of India (FSSAI), the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation's (GCMMF) Sarhad Dairy, based in Kutch, is thinking of processing it.

Considered to have several health benefits, such as high [insulin](#) and vitamin content, milk from 'the ship of the desert' could see an [FSSAI](#) okay in four months, says GCMMF, the country's largest dairy cooperative, which markets milk and milk products under the Amul brand.

FSSAI is yet to formalise standards for camel milk. The animal husbandry departments of Gujarat and Rajasthan, which have a significant population of the animal (Bikaner also has the National Research Centre on Camel, NRCC) have approached FSSAI in this regard.

R S Sodhi, managing director of GCMMF, says camel milk take some time before it gains mass appeal, thanks to its salty flavour. "It's a very niche product, and no other organised dairy in India is processing it at the moment. It is consumed in West Asia for its health benefits," he said.

Kutch-based [Sarhad Dairy](#) is ready with a plan. "We will start processing camel milk at our Bhuj (Kutch's capital) plant once the formal approvals are in place. We only need to add one production line at that plant, requiring an investment of Rs 70-80 lakh," said Valamaji Humbal, chairman.

The state government has already sanctioned Rs 80 lakh for this to the Sarhad Dairy, for an initial capacity of around 5,000 litres per day (lpd), says A J Kachhi Patel, director, agriculture and cooperation, government of Gujarat.

Humbal says the dairy plans initial processing of 2,000-3,000 lpd, gradually increasing it to 10,000 lpd, based on demand. The plan is produce value-added milk products at a later stage.

A practical issue, as mentioned earlier, of raising the demand for camel milk is that it is salty in taste. Also, its shelf life is low. Rajasthan Cooperative Dairy Federation (RCDF) had ground-tested by launching camel milk under the Saras brand a few years earlier. "The project was not viable, as the quantities were low and also the product has a low shelf life," says L K Kaushik, general manager, marketing, RCDF.

Eventually, RCDF withdrew the product around 2010, as the demand fell after the initial

euphoria. The milk, however, is expected to be lapped by health-conscious urban dwellers, as well as patients of chronic ailments.

Says Rajesh Kumar Sawal, principal scientist, animal nutrition, NRCC,; “The fat percentage in camel milk is 1.5 to 3.3 per cent, lower than cow and buffalo milk. Plus, thanks to the milk’s high insulin content, its consumption plays an effective role in management of Type-I diabetes.” NRCC says it is also effective in health management of different types of tuberculosis.

Pricing, said Humal, would depend on consumer response. “We will pay a sufficient price to camel breeders and are open to making losses in the beginning.” The dairy will form a co-operative society of camel breeders to channelise the milk procurement.

Sahjeevan, a local non-government body, working with camel breeders, is likely to work with Sarhad Dairy. A spokesperson of the NGO said they were trying to raise awareness levels on camel milk.

And, once the formal approval comes, it could be a boon to breeders in the area.

According to Union agriculture ministry’s 19th livestock census report of 2012, the camel population in India is 400,000 in India, of which milch camels are estimated to be 210,000. The total number had fallen 22.6 per cent in 2012, compared to the 2007 census data.