



**EMPOWERING  
WOMEN TO  
INCREASE DAIRY  
PRODUCTIVITY:**

**FRIESLANDCAMPINA**

**ENGRO**

# Empowering women to increase dairy productivity: FrieslandCampina Engro

Livestock accounts for 61 percent of Pakistan's agri GDP dominated by the dairy sub-sector. And 80 percent of dairy animals are with farm families where the women of the household are most often involved in animal care. This makes it difficult to increase dairy productivity. FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan has turned this challenge into an opportunity for women empowerment while increasing dairy productivity and farm family livelihoods. Most participating women farmers have received their first paid employment and a role in family decision-making.

## Introduction

Pakistan's livestock sector, dominated by dairy farming, plays a vital role in the national economy, contributing approximately 14.63 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (which is 61 percent of agri GDP) and employing a significant portion of the population. But over 80 percent of the dairy animals are with small farm families where the women of the household are most often involved in animal care. Despite the



*Training of farmers*

importance of the dairy sector, challenges such as limited access to resources, unequal opportunities, and gender disparities persist, particularly in rural areas where Pakistan's poverty is prevalent.

FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited (FCEPL) is a prominent Pakistani dairy company and a subsidiary of the Dutch multinational dairy cooperative Royal FrieslandCampina. Originally established as Engro Foods in 2005, FCEPL inaugurated its first production facility in Sukkur, Pakistan, marking the debut of its flagship UHT milk brand, Olper's. In 2016, a strategic partnership with Royal FrieslandCampina was formed, providing FCEPL access to over 150 years of dairy expertise, advanced technology, and extensive research and development capabilities.

With production facilities located in Sukkur in Sindh province and Sahiwal in Punjab province, and a mega dairy farm at Nara in northeastern Sindh, FCEPL operates a supply chain comprising more than 1,100 milk collection centers and a network that includes thousands of farmers. This expansive footprint ensures a sustainable and efficient supply chain, supporting knowledgeable farmers and empowered communities.

## Dairy Development Program (DDP)

Central to FCEPL's commitment is its Dairy Development Program (DDP), a comprehensive initiative designed to foster inclusive growth and enhance profitability within the dairy sector. The DDP focuses on sharing best practices in dairy farming, offering training in animal health, housing and barn design, feed and water management, milk hygiene, aflatoxin control, farm economics, calf rearing, and environmental sustainability. Annually, over 40,000 farmers benefit from training sessions that leverage global dairy expertise, including insights shared by Dutch farmers through the Farmer-to-Farmer initiative.

Recognizing the financial challenges faced by dairy farmers, FCEPL provides critical support through subsidized loans from partner banks and interest-free loans to meet operational expenses. The company further demonstrates its commitment to community development by awarding scholarships annually to farmer's daughters under its scholarship initiative, emphasizing women's empowerment and contributing to improved standards of living in rural communities.

FCEPL's dedication to empowering women in rural areas is evident through initiatives aimed at integrating women into the dairy supply chain particularly through FCEPL's Enhancing Women's Income through Dairy Interventions (EWID) program (discussed in detail below). The company employs female veterinarians who train female farmers in best practices, actively engages women as milk collection agents, and focuses on capacity building through continuous training and the provision of modern dairy equipment at discounted rates through partnerships with farm input suppliers.

**Operational support** for dairy farmers extends to infrastructure development, including technical and financial assistance for the construction of dairy sheds, and the provision of essential farm machinery such as Total Mixed Ration (TMR) mixers, silage machines, and milking machines. A dedicated helpline and advisory SMS service further ensure that farmers receive timely technical assistance and information, enhancing their operational efficiency and productivity.

In alignment with its environmental sustainability goals, FCEPL supports dairy farmers in adopting solar energy solutions to minimize operational energy costs and reduce environmental impact. By subsidizing solar installations, FCEPL facilitated 64 dairy farmers in transitioning to solar energy in 2023. Additionally, the company promotes environmental conservation through tree plantation initiatives at milk collection centers, commercial dairy farms, and its own Nara Farm, planting approximately 15,000 trees annually.



## Flagship initiative for women's empowerment: Enhancing Women's Income through Dairy Interventions (EWID)

The Enhancing Women's Income through Dairy Interventions (EWID) initiative by FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited (FCEPL) aims to empower rural women by equipping them with entrepreneurial skills and opportunities, thereby challenging traditional gender roles prevalent in rural Pakistan. In many patriarchal communities, women bear significant



*Training of women farmers and entrepreneurs*

domestic and caregiving responsibilities that often go unrecognized and undervalued, leaving them overburdened with farming duties limited to household tasks without access to broader economic opportunities. Through EWID, these women are integrated into the dairy supply chain, enhancing their economic status and positively impacting various social indicators.

Launched in 2019 with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade of the Government of Australia, this project operates in districts Vehari and Sahiwal in Punjab province. To date, EWID has trained 4,120 individuals, including 3000 women as basic livestock beneficiaries, 100 as livestock extension workers, and 20 as milk collection agents, alongside 1,000 men who received gender sensitization training. By transitioning from unpaid labor to active participants in the workforce, these women contribute not only to their household income but also improve family nutrition, invest in children's education, enhance healthcare access, and strengthen overall household resilience.

A survey conducted by Pakistan Business Council's Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business (CERB) revealed that the EWID initiative by FCEPL has significantly impacted women and households in rural Pakistan across various dimensions. The following sections provide insights gleaned from this survey.

### Impacting women and households

The Enhancing Women's Income through Dairy Interventions (EWID) initiative has played a crucial role in empowering women by providing them with opportunities to engage in income-generating activities and entrepreneurial ventures. This initiative has not only enhanced their economic status but has also improved their decision-making power within their households. Research highlights that economic empowerment translates into greater control over income and expenditure, which is pivotal to reshaping gender dynamics and reducing traditional barriers faced by women in decision-making processes. A substantial 86 percent of participants reported an increase in decision-making power, underscoring the program's success in fostering financial independence and freedom of movement among rural women. Moreover, the initiative has facilitated women's ability to exercise autonomy over discretionary spending, with 94 percent expressing control over how their income is allocated. This empowerment not only supports individual financial autonomy but also contributes to household well-being.

## Impacting livelihoods

The impact of FCEPL's EWID initiative on rural women and households in Pakistan is significant across multiple dimensions. Research highlights deep gender inequalities. Traditionally, women's labor in agriculture and dairy farming goes unrecognized and unpaid, further perpetuating economic marginalization. The EWID program addresses these challenges by empowering women through training, financial support, and inclusion in the dairy supply chain as milk collection agents, extension workers, and basic suppliers. Surveyed beneficiaries noted that this program marked their first paid employment, significantly boosting household incomes and improving overall family livelihoods.

Despite financial constraints, women earning through the EWID initiative contribute crucially to family nutrition and expenses. Moreover, training under EWID has enhanced dairy farming practices, leading to increased milk production reported by 71% of respondents. This improvement stems from knowledge in hygiene, animal health, and fodder management, crucial for sustainable dairy operations. Women involved in the program manage both farm and household responsibilities, illustrating their dual burden of work. However, despite increased responsibilities, many beneficiaries find empowerment through financial independence and recognition of their contributions.

## Impacting community

FCEPL's EWID initiative has made significant strides in impacting rural communities, particularly by enhancing capabilities and building resilience towards income shock among women involved in dairy farming. The program has not only empowered women economically but also equipped them with essential skills and knowledge to improve livestock health and increase milk production. A unanimous 100% of respondents reported acquiring valuable dairy management insights and practices, contributing to healthier livestock and higher productivity. Beyond economic gains, the initiative has spurred investments in children's education, reflecting a commitment to enhancing human capital and future opportunities. This strategic allocation of income by women underscores their role in bolstering household resilience against income shocks and other challenges.

Moreover, the EWID program has addressed key vulnerabilities faced by livestock farmers, such as droughts, diseases, and market access constraints. Through comprehensive training on animal health, vaccination, and disaster management, women have not only enhanced their livelihoods but also established veterinary service points within their communities. These initiatives provide critical first aid and support during emergencies, further bolstering resilience against unforeseen events. As highlighted by Tehmina, one of the beneficiaries, this newfound capability has transformed her role within her family, offering hope and stability in times of uncertainty.

The EWID program by FCEPL represents a significant effort towards empowering women in rural Pakistan through economic independence and enhanced decision-making power. By recognizing and remunerating women for their contributions to dairy farming, the program has not only improved livelihoods but also strengthened household resilience against income shocks. Ultimately, EWID demonstrates that women-focused empowerment initiatives can deliver substantial social and economic benefits while laying a foundation for sustainable development in rural communities.

In conclusion, FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited (FCEPL) has exemplified transformative impact through its initiatives, particularly the EWID program, aimed at empowering women in rural Pakistan. By providing women with economic opportunities in dairy farming, FCEPL has enhanced household incomes and resilience against shocks. It has also empowered women to take active roles in decision-making and community development. This comprehensive approach, supported by training, financial inclusion, and gender sensitization, has not only improved the livelihoods of rural families but also set a precedent for inclusive economic growth. Such success has prompted FrieslandCampina to replicate this model in other countries, showcasing the scalability and sustainability of their empowerment strategies beyond Pakistan's borders.