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Unprocessed Milk Production versus the Demand for Dairy in 2026

Comparing the period July 2024 – June 2025 to July 2025 – June 2026.

NielsenIQ (as supplied by SAMPRO) provides information based on monthly surveys of the retail sales of milk and other dairy products. Non-retail sales, such as sales to wholesalers and industrial buyers, which form significant parts of the total sales of dairy products, are not part of NielsenIQ surveys.

The surveys of NielsenIQ in respect of UHT milk, flavoured milk, yoghurt, maas and pre-packaged cheese, cover the retail sales in the following types of stores:

- Major stores *(Hypermarkets and a defined group of supermarkets consisting of Shoprite, Checkers, Pick 'n Pay Supers, Pick 'n Pay Family, Superspar and Woolworths (Food));*
- Convenience stores *(Branded Superettes consisting of Kwikspar, OK Foods, Sentra, Pick 'n Pay mini, Score, Friendly, Shield (Retail), Friendly's and 7-Eleven and Forecourts);*
- Urban Counter and Self Service; and
- Rural Independents.

In the case of fresh milk, cream, butter and cream cheese, the NielsenIQ surveys cover only "*major stores*" as described in the previous paragraph.

Although the surveys of NielsenIQ in respect of the products mentioned in the previous paragraph only cover "*major stores*", the results of the surveys should be regarded as meaningful indicators of the trends in retail sales. In the table below, the NielsenIQ sample for 2024, is expressed as a percentage of the estimated total demand in the same period.

Table 1: NielsenIQ sample as a percentage of the estimated total demand. (Nielsen as supplied by SAMPRO)

	(A) NielsenIQ Sample	(B) Estimated Total Demand*	(C) A as a percentage of B
Pasteurised milk and ESL Milk (L)	206 708 109	523 804 600	39.5
UHT and sterilised milk (L)	552 938	1 008 127 038	54.8
Flavoured milk (L)	15 159 104	47 229 409	32.1
Yoghurt and snacks (L)	180 649 248	231 967 577	77.9
Maas (L)	233 197 354	274 717 200	84.9
Pre-packaged cheese (kg)	40 260 385	98 146 970	41.0
Cream cheese (kg)	3 416 369	5 119 642	66.7
Butter (kg)	7 543 602	24 858 002	30.3
Cream (L)	11 101 521	22 445 361	49.5

Estimated total demand for 2025, as obtained from BMI, supplied by SAMPRO

Table 2 below shows the change in retail sales for milk and other dairy products from July 2025 – June 2026 compared to July 2024 – June 2025. The last column of the table expresses these increases on a mass basis, in milk equivalents.

Table 2: The change in DEMAND for dairy products as per the June 2026 Nielsen Report, in terms of milk equivalents.

	Estimated Total Demand [1] 2025	% Change in demand [2]	Increased demand in 2026
	(milk equivalent '000 litres)	July 2024 – June 2025 vs. July 2025 – June 2026	(milk equivalent '000 litres)
Pasteurised milk and ESL Milk	523 805	0,4%	+ 2 095
UHT and sterilised milk	1 008 127	3,5%	+ 35 284
Flavoured milk	47 229	10,8%	+ 5 101
Yoghurt and snacks	231 968	3,1%	+ 7 191
Maas	274 717	2,0%	+ 5 494
Pre-packaged cheese	934 359	4,4%	+ 41 112
Cream cheese	23 550	10,0%	+ 2 355
TOTAL	**3 043 755**		**+ 98 632**

1) Estimated demand for 2025, as supplied by BMI, as supplied by SAMPRO
2) NielsenIQ as supplied by SAMPRO

Table 3: The SUPPLY of unprocessed milk during the specific time periods.

	July 2024 – June 2025	July 2025 – June 2026	Difference
Total supply of unprocessed milk ('000 litres)	3 355 448	3 385 563	**+30 115**

Source: Milk SA

Key Takeaway

Considering the supply and demand figures for unprocessed milk, it is evident that the increase in demand (**+98 632 000 litres**) significantly exceeded the increase in supply (**+30 115 000 litres**) during the 12 months leading up to June 2026 compared with the previous corresponding period. This resulted in a **68 517 000 litre gap** between the growth in demand and supply. Balance in the market was obtained through applying available stocks and imports. In percentage terms, demand increased by **3.2%** over the period, while the supply of unprocessed milk increased by only **0.9%**. This indicates that demand for unprocessed milk increased at a considerably faster rate than supply during the period under review. This article will be expanded to factor in the allocation of unprocessed milk to the different dairy products.

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