

SNAPSHOT

Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteers Support Egyptian Milk Collection Center on its Journey to Self-Reliance through Improved Milk Safety



Hallie Davidson, Dairy Foods Tech Service Engineer

“We stressed the necessity of training all involved personal – starting at the farms with good hygienic milking and storage procedures, use of clean equipment, animal welfare and nutrition.”

Hallie Davidson, Land O'Lakes, Inc. volunteer



Eugene Evans, Food Inspector 2- New York State Dept. of Agriculture and Markets teaching basics of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) to a group of staff, extension agents and community vets in the milk collection center

The El-Pharaonia Milk Collection Center (MCC) is a small collection center with the capacity of gathering five tons of milk per day from local smallholder dairy farmers. El-Pharaonia MCC and its farmers struggled with proper milking and handling processes and the resulting milk was often lower quality and could only be sold to small processing plants for low prices. In 2019, the USAID-funded Farmer-to-Farmer Program (F2F) partnered with North Africa for Agribusiness Development (NAAD), a local organization that is implementing the ILO-EYE: RAWABET project, to help improve El-Pharaonia MCC's milk quality and connect them to markets. After a year of partnering to improve El-Pharaonia, the MCC has improved the quality of their milk significantly, enabling them to secure a contract with a large milk processor in the area. Each month El-Pharaonia MCC is now able to sell all 150 tons of their collected milk for an increased price, **resulting in almost \$4,000 of additional revenue per month.**

One of the main contributors to success was the Global Markets Program (GMaP) self-assessment tool. The GMaP was created by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), a global coalition dedicated to improving food safety worldwide, to help small food-oriented businesses improve their food safety practices to access new higher value markets. With the help of the GMaP tool, the F2F staff first helped the MCC to assess their own food safety practices. After the MCC had an understanding of their food safety gaps, F2F FSQ then mobilized two expert volunteers to provide support and training targeted to the MCC's specific food safety needs. The volunteers conducted on-the-job training for 14 MCC extension agents, staff and owners focused on dairy specific food safety practices and encouraged the MCC to disseminate this information to its farmers and collection point personnel.

“The U.S. volunteers trained us on how to apply hygienic practices when milking and handling. We've trained 75 farmers on how to do that too. Now, farmers know how to properly milk and have decreased the total bacterial count in the milk”, said Dr. Laila Ibrahim, community Vet.

El-Pharaonia MCC's next mission is to further decrease the bacteria count in their milk and upgrade the collection center's infrastructure and then embark on the process of registering with Egypt's National Food Safety Authority (NFSA). The food safety improvements already made are a good start but are only the beginning. With the skills and knowledge necessary transferred from the volunteers and the GMaP tool at their fingertips to help guide them toward increased food safety on their own, El-Pharaonia MCC will continue to strive for improved milk quality.

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