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PRESS RELEASE BY DR CHRIS VAN DIJK, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE MILK PRODUCERS' ORGANISATION

For immediate release

Celebrating milk the South African way

What better way to acknowledge a natural, healthy and versatile product, packed full of nutrients and available at affordable prices, than introducing its own day where all aspects of the product are celebrated by countries around the world – World Milk Day! The Milk Producers' Organisation is excited that its strategy for 2016 includes increasing the demand for milk and milk products by participating in World Milk Day for the first time this year.

For many decades, dairy industries world-wide have played an important role in helping to feed people. Increasing recognition is being given to the role dairy plays in our daily diet and how it contributes to a healthy lifestyle regardless of a person's age. A large number of international peer review papers clearly illustrate how milk and milk products help people meet their nutritional needs, lower the risk of certain diseases, promote sports recovery and muscle-building and contribute to healthy ageing.

Milk and milk products can be part of a luxury treat for the higher income groups or an important source of dietary energy, protein and fat for the lower income groups.

The first World Milk Day was held in 2001 and since then many countries throughout the world have joined in the celebrations, with the number growing each year.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), World Milk Day provides the ideal opportunity to focus the "attention on milk and to publicise activities connected with milk and the milk industry. The fact that many countries choose to do this on

the same day, lends additional importance to individual national celebrations and shows that milk has global importance.”

Following a request to propose a specific day on which all aspects of milk could be celebrated, the FAO decided on 1 June because a number of countries were already celebrating their own national milk day on or around this time. While most countries hold their celebrations on 1 June, some choose to hold them a week or so before or after this date.

Long before 1 June 2001, a number of countries were already recognising the significance of milk and the milk industry and had established their own national celebrations. In the US a Milk Day is celebrated to commemorate the delivery of the first bottled milk in 1878. The Kalash people of Northern Pakistan have a Milk Day as part of their Joshi festival.

In 2015, World Milk Day was celebrated in more than 40 countries. Activities included sports events such as milk-themed marathons and family runs, milking demonstrations and farm visits, activities at schools, concerts, conferences and seminars, competitions and a variety of events aimed at promoting the value of milk and milk products and highlighting the important role played by the dairy industry in the economy of countries.

The MPO’s planned activities for 2016 include a Farmer’s Day in the Eastern Cape on 31 May, distributing dairy products at Jasmyn Farm Stall at Hartbeespoort Dam on 5 June, distributing dairy products at schools in KwaZulu-Natal on 31 May and in Bloemfontein in the Free State on 31 July.

The MPO would like to invite everyone to celebrate milk with the rest of the world on 1 June or to join one of these events.

CHEERS...TO MILK!!

Enquiries: Barbara Bieldt, e-mail address: barbara@mpo.co.za, 083 235 2629