

India's Milk Revolution: From Scarcity to the World's Largest Producer



In 74 years, India's milk production grew 14.6-fold - from 170 Lakh MT of milk in 1950-51 to 2,479 Lakh MT in 2024-25. What took an entire year to produce in 1950-51, India now produces in less than one month.



THE MILK CALENDAR

How much milk does India produce at today's pace?



CONNECTS TO DATA STORIES #00 & #01

Story #00 opened this Atlas citing 2,479 lakh tonnes as part of India's ₹15.06 lakh crore livestock economy and its #1 world ranking in milk — this story is the 74-year journey behind that single number. Milk is also the single largest component of the livestock GVA that Story #01 projects compounding toward \$1 trillion, so this same journey doubles as the historical foundation that trajectory builds on — a sector that grew from scarcity into India's largest livestock sub-sector by value.

Source : BAHS 2025 / DAHD historical milk production series; NDDB Operation Flood documentation; World ranking : PIB/DAHD year-end review.



From 365 Days to 25: The Making of a Dairy Superpower



India's milk story is not just about a bigger number. It is about a country that imported milk powder in the 1950s and 60s becoming, within a single working lifetime, the largest milk producer the world has ever had — by a margin no other country approaches.

The starting point was genuine scarcity: in 1950-51, India produced 170 lakh tonnes of milk for the entire year — a modest, largely subsistence-level output for a nascent nation.

Operation Flood (1970) marks the inflection point: the "Anand pattern" cooperative dairy model was taken national, eventually linking producers to a National Milk Grid reaching hundreds of towns and cities. Production reached 539 lakh tonnes by 1990-91 — already more than three times the 1950-51 level.

The growth has kept compounding, not slowing to a plateau: from 806 lakh tonnes in 2000-01, output more than tripled to 2,478.7 lakh tonnes by 2024-25 — and the single decade from 2010-11 (1,218 LMT) to 2024-25 alone accounts for more than half of that entire increase.

India crossed the United States to become the world's largest producer in 1998 and has held that position for over 25 years since — achieved not through industrial mega-dairies, but through the aggregate effort of tens of millions of smallholder families, most milking one or two animals each.

The clearest way to feel the scale is through time, not tonnes: at today's production pace, India produces its entire 1950-51 annual output in roughly 25 days. A number that once took a full year now takes less than a month — the same transformation, measured in a unit everyone understands.

Data Table

Year	Milk Production	Multiple of 1950-51	Time to Produce 170 LMT
1950-51	170 LMT	1.0×	365 days
1973-74	232 LMT	1.36×	~267 days
1990-91	539 LMT	3.17×	~115 days
2000-01	806 LMT	4.74×	~77 days
2010-11	1,218 LMT	7.16×	~51 days
2020-21	2,100 LMT	12.35×	~30 days
2024-25	2,478 LMT	14.6×	~25 days

Source : BAHS 2025 / DAHD historical milk production series; NDDB Operation Flood documentation; World ranking : PIB/DAHD year-end review.

