

The 8th WORLD SCHOOL MILK DAY – 26th September 2007

Enjoy World School Milk Day! Enjoy Milk!

On the last Wednesday in September of each year, over 30 countries – regardless of whether they are large or small, rich or poor – celebrate World School Milk Day. The interest in school milk is universal. The first World School Milk Day was held in 2000 and it has since become an annual event, with a growing number of countries joining in on the celebration.

Why hold a World School Milk Day?

The Day provides an opportunity to focus attention on the benefits of milk as part of a healthy diet for growing children and thereby to promote its distribution and consumption in schools. Importance is lent to the event by the fact that other countries are doing the same thing, on the same day, and that FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) is supporting the activity.

How did it start?

Following discussions on FAO's e-mail forum on school milk issues regarding the selection of a particular day on which school milk could be celebrated internationally, consensus was reached amongst members that World School Milk Day would be celebrated on the last Wednesday in September. This date was chosen because in all the countries surveyed, schools were open during this month and Wednesday was a school day.

How is World School Milk Day celebrated?

Everyone is free to choose how to commemorate World School Milk Day. Celebrations can be at any level - from national or regional events to individual schools. Some countries have started in a small way and have organized bigger celebrations with each passing year. Big or small, all have a common goal: to draw attention to school milk and thereby promote its consumption.

In almost all countries, free milk is distributed to children in schools. Often dairy companies act as sponsors of the Day and provide not only free milk but also promotional material such as t-shirts, caps, pens and stickers for the children. Posters, booklets, games and other educational materials are also produced for use by teachers in the classroom. Other activities include sporting events, drawing and art competitions, theater plays and celebrity visits to school. Internet plays a growing role in the promotion of World School Milk Day and a number of countries feature competitions, interactive games and background information on the Day on their websites. In conjunction with World School Milk Day many countries organise meetings and conferences to discuss the importance of milk consumption for growing children, the development of school milk programmes and related topics.

Campaigns and initiatives related to World School Milk Day receive wide media coverage, showing the potential interest in school milk and illustrating the huge effort made by the organizers in the various countries in making the Day an unforgettable event for children and adults.

What is FAO's role?

FAO's role is to inform, remind, encourage and promote the Day through its email discussion lists and to collate and disseminate information from list members regarding national celebrations, inspiring others to join in. The real ideas and organizing work happens at the

national or local level in the various countries.

In celebrating the Day, FAO's involvement can be freely mentioned; however, this does not extend to FAO endorsing a particular branded product. At the same time, a key facet of FAO's work on school milk has been the dual promotion of dairy industry development and good child nutrition. Therefore, branded products and promotions, which are a way of promoting the dairy industry, can be used during celebrations.

FAO operates a free e-mail discussion group on school milk issues. To join, or if your country, region, area or school is interested in celebrating World School Milk Day in 2007, please contact: FAO-School-Milk@fao.org