

New dairy regulation: fat content



The reclassification of dairy products in South Africa was introduced end of March 2016.

A medium-fat class is introduced: According to the new dairy and imitation dairy products Regulation 260, one of the important changes is that the fat classes for milk have been redefined. The new fat classes will give consumers more choice when buying dairy products. The most notable change is that a medium-fat class has been introduced. Milk in this class has a fat content of more than 1.5% to 3.3%. Previously, low-fat milk was classified as having 0.5% to 2.5% fat. According to the new definition, the fat content of low-fat milk should now be more than 0.5% to 1.5%. Therefore, 2% milk will no longer be classified as low-fat, but as 2% medium-fat milk.

This table outlines the new fat classes for milk.

Class designation	Previous legislation R 2581	New legislation R 260	
	Fat content (%)	Fat content (%)	Alternate class designation
High-fat milk	At least 4.5	More than 4.5	
Full-fat milk	At least 3.3 but not more than 4.5	More than 3.3 to 4.5	Full-cream milk Whole milk Milk
Medium-fat milk	Not in regulation	More than 1.5 to 3.3	% Medium-fat milk % Medium-cream milk
Low-fat milk	At least 0.5 but not more than 2.5	More than 0.5 to 1.5	Low-fat milk
Fat-free milk	Not more than 0.5	Not more than 0.5	Skimmed milk

The changes are mainly as a result of the need to align national legislation with international standards.

According to health legislation and international standards, dairy products cannot be claimed to be 'low-fat' if the total fat content exceeds 1.5% in the case of liquid products, such as milk, or 3% in the case of solid food products.

As South Africa is a member of the World Trade Organization and therefore subscribes to the rules of fair international trade, the amendment also prevents possible technical trade barriers. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries confirmed that Regulation 260, published in the Government Gazette on 27 March 2015, came into effect on 28 March 2016. Companies have to comply with the requirements of the new regulation by 30 September 2016. Departmental inspectors have been instructed to proceed directly to issuing seizures of non-compliant products after that date.



The redefinition of the fat-classes also affects other dairy products. Regulation 260 provides fat classes for dairy products such as milk, buttermilk, cultured milk (maas), yoghurt, drinking yoghurt, cottage cheese, evaporated milk and condensed milk. This means that some products formerly classified as low-fat are now classified as medium-fat products.

The carbohydrate (lactose) content of milk is typically 4.8%, but can vary between 4.7% and 5.0% across the different types of milk.

The protein content of milk is stipulated in Regulation 260 as 3%, calculated for fat-free milk. Typically, the protein content can vary between 3.2% and 3.4% across the different types of milk.



An Initiative by the Consumer Education Project of Milk SA

For more information email: info@rediscoverdairy.co.za or visit our website at: www.rediscoverdairy.co.za