

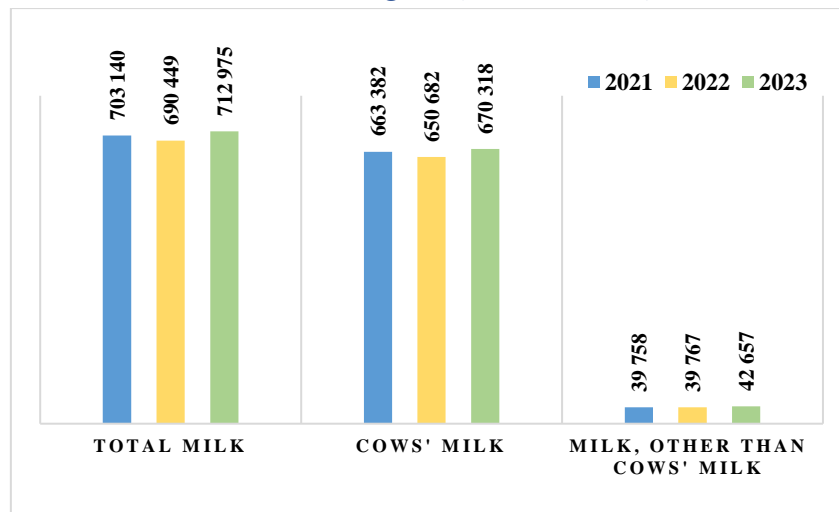


### Activity of the dairies in Bulgaria 2023

235 dairies (milk processors) provided data on milk processing and manufactured milk products in 2023. They have processed 713 million litres of raw milk (including deliveries from EU member states and imports from third countries). Processed cows' milk dominates (94.0%) with 3.0% more compared to 2022. In 2023 ewes' milk takes second place (with a share of 3.8%) and is 12.2% more. Goats' milk occupies 1.7% of processed milk and is 1.0% more compared to 2022. Processed buffaloes' milk and mixed milk is 0.5% of the total milk, with a decrease of 4.6% in 2023.

Figure 1

*Processed milk in Bulgaria (thousand litres)*



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

Table 1

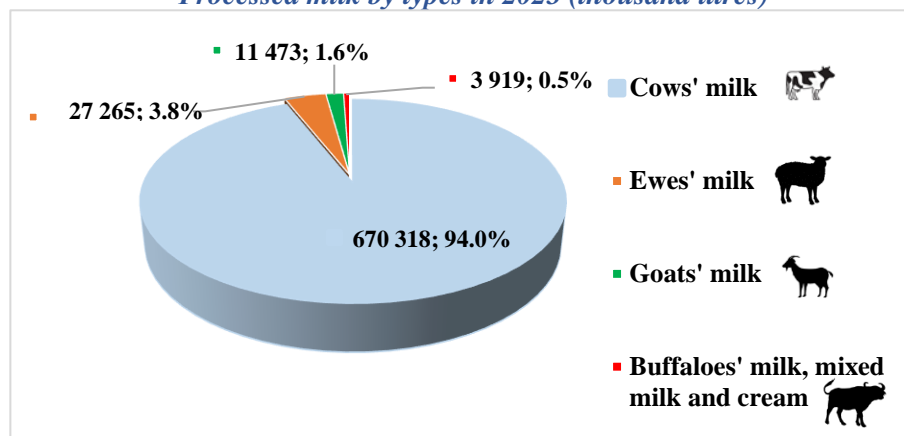
Quantities of processed milk declared in 2021, 2022 and 2023, deliveries from EU member states and imports from third countries incl.							
Type of milk	2021		2022		2023		Change 2023/2022 (%)
	Quantity (thousand litres)	Share of processed milk (%)	Quantity (thousand litres)	Share of processed milk (%)	Quantity (thousand litres)	Share of processed milk (%)	
Cows' milk	663 382	94.4%	650 682	94.4%	670 318	94.0%	3.0%
Ewes' milk	24 109	3.5%	24 295	3.4%	27 265	3.8%	12.2%
Goats' milk	11 228	1.5%	11 365	1.6%	11 473	1.7%	1.0%
Buffaloes' milk, mixed milk and cream	4 421	0.6%	4 107	0.6%	3 919	0.5%	-4.6%
<b>Total :</b>	<b>703 140</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>690 449</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>712 975</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

In 2023, according to data provided by milk processing enterprises, in addition to the amounts of raw milk by type indicated in Table 1, including imports from EU member states and from third countries, there is extra 4 807 tons of concentrated milk input in the dairy products, 5 211 tons of milk powder and cream powder, 2 377 tons of milk concentrate\* and 234 tons of other products (cream, leaven, whey). The processed quantities of raw milk delivered by EU member states or imported from third countries are over 39.2 thousand tons in total. Inputted raw materials of non-dairy origin (fats and/or proteins) are 3 615 tons.

\*milk concentrate – material, obtained by concentrating milk protein by ultrafiltration of milk, semi-skimmed milk or skimmed milk.

**Figure 2**  
*Processed milk by types in 2023 (thousand litres)*



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

**Table 2**

Dairy enterprises - Legal status 2023			
Legal status	Number	Quantities of processed milk, deliveries from EU member states and imports from third countries incl. (thousand litres)	Share of the total processed milk quantity
Sole trader (ST)	29	15 680	2.2%
Companies	199	664 869	93.3%
Other status	7	32 426	4.5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>712 975</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

The number of dairies (Table 2) owned by sole traders decreases in 2023 as well as the dairies with legal status – companies. The sole traders have processed 2.2% of the milk and companies – 93.3% of the total processed milk.

**Table 3**

Average fat and protein content in processed raw milk in 2023		
Type of milk	Milk fat content	Milk protein content
Cows' milk	3.67%	3.35%
Ewes' milk	6.29%	5.21%
Goats' milk	3.63%	3.32%
Buffaloes' milk	6.75%	4.20%

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), Agrostatistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

7 492 is the number of persons employed under an employment contract on 31.12.2023 in the 235 dairy enterprises.

The districts Plovdiv, Silistra, Razgrad, Sliven, Sofia-grad have the largest number of employees, Ruse, Kyustendil, Varna, Pleven and Pernik have the least number of employees.

In 2023 the total value (VAT excl.) of milk products sold by the dairies is 1.338 billion BGN, which is 6% more than in 2022.

Table 4

Processed milk, internal deliveries by statistical regions in 2022 and 2023 (thousand litres)					
Statistical region	2022		2023		Change total milk 2023/2022
	Total milk quantity	Cows' milk incl.	Total milk quantity	Cows' milk incl.	
Severozapaden	56 544	53 504	54 437	51 061	-3.7%
Severen tsentralen	167 369	162 841	173 962	168 664	3.9%
Severoiztochen	58 557	51 438	61 095	53 739	4.3%
Yugoiztochen	93 484	86 244	100 051	91 391	7.0%
Yugozapaden	56 894	55 382	45 921	43 856	-19.3%
Yuzhen tsentralen	234 293	219 653	238 233	224 755	1.7%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>667 141</b>	<b>629 062</b>	<b>673 699</b>	<b>633 466</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

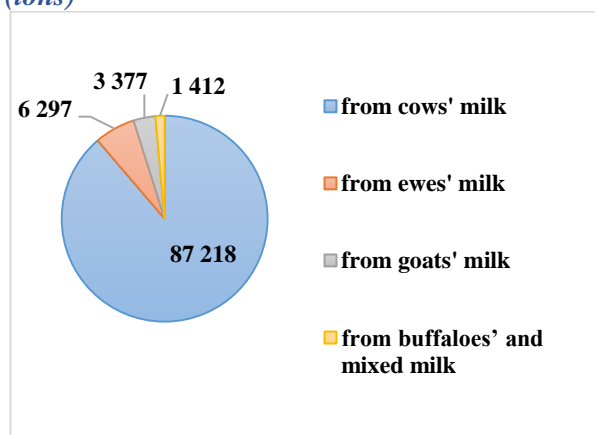
Table 5

Dairy processors in 2023 and dairy products by type of milk							
Products for consumption	Production 2022 Quantity	Production 2023 Quantity	Production 2023			Product quantity change 2023/2022	
			Share of each product in the product group (%)	Number of dairies	Average production		
Drinking milk (thousand litres)	66 153	64 447	100%	58	1 111	-2.6%	
Cream – fresh or sour (tons)	2 545	2 301	100%	36	64	-9.6%	
Natural yoghurt – (tons)	from cows' milk	149 222	150 684	97.9%	122	1 235	1.0%
	from ewes' or mixed milk	2 436	2 437	1.6%	25	97	0.0%
	from buffaloes' milk	327	317	0.2%	14	23	-3.1%
	from goats' milk	539	490	0.3%	12	41	-9.1%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>152 524</b>	<b>153 928</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1 231</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
Flavoured yoghurt (with or without additives), milk desserts and milk based drinks (tons)	14 067	9 569	100%	22	435	-32.0%	
Cheese (tons)	from cows' milk	86 086	87 218	88.7%	204	428	1.3%
	from ewes' milk	7 249	6 297	6.5%	64	98	-13.1%
	from buffaloes' milk and mixed milk	2 924	3 377	3.4%	56	60	15.5%
	from goats' milk	1 338	1 412	1.4%	45	31	5.5%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>97 597</b>	<b>98 304</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
Processed and smoked cheese (tons)	1 550	1 605	100%	27	59	3.5%	

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

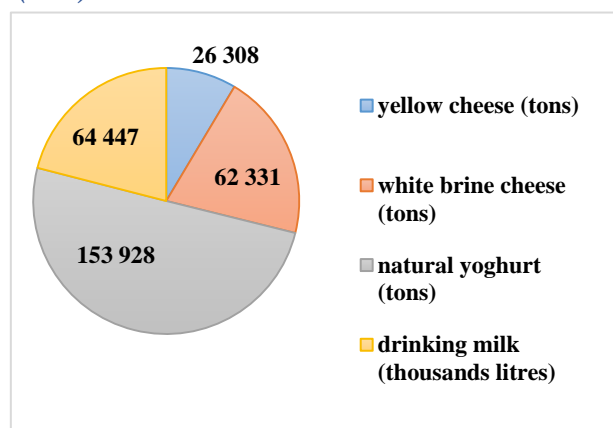
## Basic dairy products in 2023

**Figure 3**  
*Cheese production by type of milk (tons)*



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

**Figure 4**  
*Basic dairy products in Bulgaria (tons)*



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

In 2023, the production of natural yoghurt increases with 0.9% compared with 2022 (153 928 tons). Yoghurt from buffaloes' and cows' milk decreases. Yoghurt from cows' milk has the largest share with 97.9%, followed by ewes' and mixed milk – 1.6%.

Flavoured yoghurt (with or without additives), milk desserts and milk based drinks (tons) are 9 569 tons – 32% less than in 2022.

There is a slight increase in cheese production – 0.7% in comparison with 2022. Cheese from cows' milk has the largest share – 88.7%, followed by cheese obtained from ewes' milk – 6.4% (Table 5). The cheese production of buffaloes' and mixed milk increased to 15.5% in 2023.

## Production of basic dairy products by statistical regions (NUTS 2)

**Table 6**

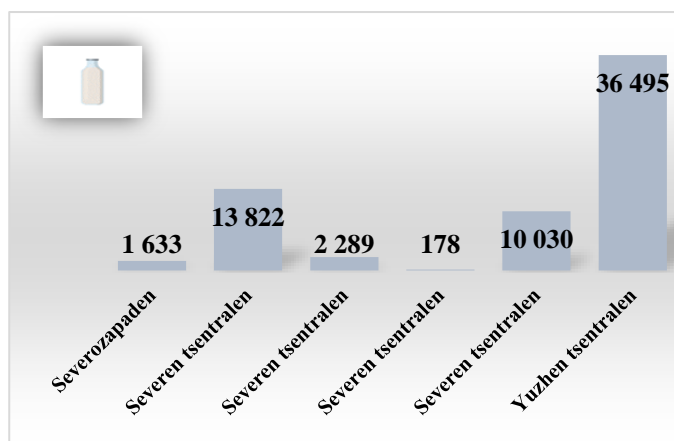
Production of basic dairy products by statistical regions (NUTS 2) in 2023							
Dairy production	Severo-zapaden	Severen tsentralen	Severo-iztochen	Yugo-iztochen	Yugo-zapaden	Yuzhen tsentralen	Bulgaria
Drinking milk (thousand litres)	1 633	13 822	2 289	178	10 030	36 495	<b>64 447</b>
Natural yoghurt – (tons)	11 721	48 710	6 505	5 578	17 623	63 791	<b>153 928</b>
White brine cheese (tons)	5 495	23 016	8 691	5 039	2 834	17 256	<b>62 331</b>
Yellow cheese (tons)	1 716	4 062	745	8 041	710	11 034	<b>26 308</b>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

The production of drinking milk in 2023 (Figure 5) is highest in the Yuzhen tsentralen region, with a share of 56.6% of the total production. The Yuzhen tsentralen region records the largest production of yoghurt – 41.4% of the total production, and yellow cheese – 41.9% of the total production.

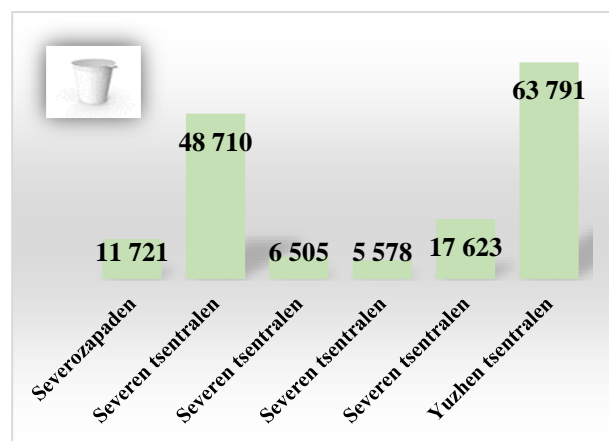
The largest quantity of white brine cheese production (Figure 7) is produced in the Severen tsentralen region and is 36.9% of the total production at national level.

**Figure 5**  
*Drinking milk production by statistical regions (thousand litres)*



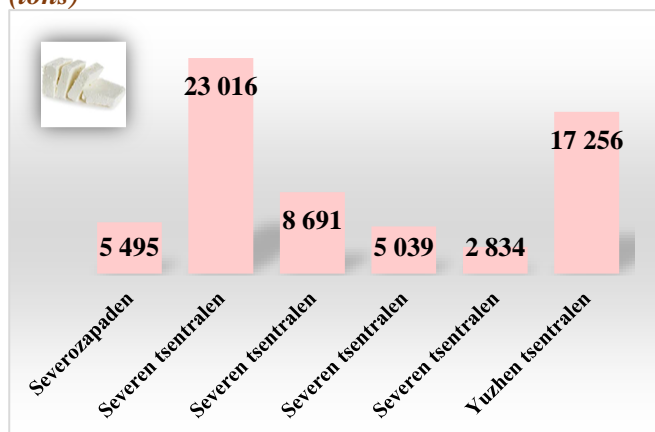
Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

**Figure 6**  
*Yoghurt production by statistical regions (tons)*



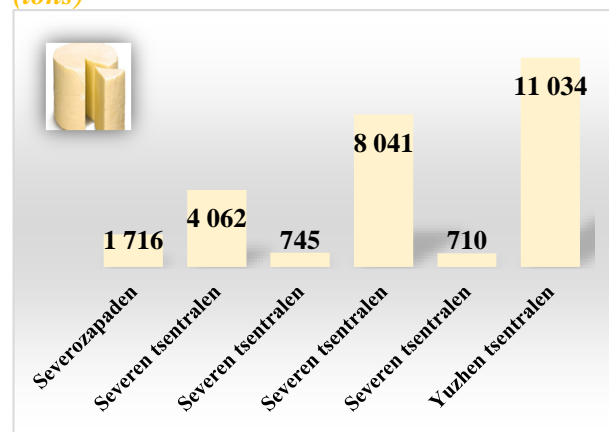
Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Agrostistics Department, Activity of the dairies in 2023

**Figure 7**  
*White brine cheese production by statistical regions (tons)*



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Agrostistics Department Activity of the dairies in 2023

**Figure 8**  
*Yellow cheese production by statistical regions (tons)*



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Agrostistics Department Activity of the dairies in 2023

153 928 tons yoghurt, 64 million litres drinking milk, 62 331 tons white brine cheese and 26 308 tons yellow cheese are manufactured in 2023.

The production of whole, semi-skimmed and skimmed yoghurt increases, milk based drinks decreases with 17% (Table 7).

The manufactured quantities of yellow cheese in 2023 is 5.0% more than 2022. The quantities of yellow cheese from cows' milk increases 6.4%, but yellow cheese obtained from ewes' milk decreases with 14.3%. Yellow cheese from cows' milk takes the largest share – 93.4%.

The production of white brine cheese increases compared with 2022 to 1 057 tons or 1.7%. The largest share (86.1%) is for white brine cheese from cows' milk. The white brine cheese, obtained from other type of milk increases – 15.8%. The production of brined cheese with added vegetable fat and/or proteins decreases by 1.2% in 2023.

The production of processed and smoked cheeses is 3.5% more in 2023. Other types of cheese (soft cheese, blue cheese, etc.) also increased (+36.1%). There is significant increase of other milk products. The reported increase in 2023 is 450 tons.

The production of cream is 2 301 tons which is a reduction of 9.6%. Butter production decreases to 945 tons or with 29.3%.

Table 7

Comparison of main products production by dairy enterprises in 2022 and 2023					
Products for consumption		Production 2022	Production 2023		Change 2023/2022
		Quantity	Quantity	Share of each product in the product group (%)	
Drinking milk (thousand litres)	Whole	23 523	21 661	33.7%	-7.9%
	Semi-skimmed	41 534	40 950	63.5%	-1.4%
	Skimmed	1 096	1 836	2.8%	67.5%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>66 153</b>	<b>64 447</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>
Cream – fresh or sour (tons)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>2 545</b>	<b>2 301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-9.6%</b>
Yoghurt (with or without additives), milk desserts and milk based drinks (tons)	Whole or semi- skimmed	131 618	135 072	87.7%	2.6%
	Skimmed	720	2 103	1.4%	192.1%
	For drinking	20 186	16 753	10.9%	-17.0%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>152 524</b>	<b>153 928</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
Butter(tons)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>1 336</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-29.3%</b>
White brine cheese (tons)	From cows' milk	52 460	53 641	86.1%	2.3%
	Of which: Non- dairy materials as fats and/or proteins included	12 371	12 219	19.6%	-1.2%
	From ewes' milk	5 540	4 899	7.8%	-11.6%
	Other type of milk	3 274	3 791	6.1%	15.8%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>61 274</b>	<b>62 331</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
Yellow cheese (tons)	From cows' milk	23 091	24 558	93.4%	6.4%
	From ewes' milk	1 518	1 301	4.9%	-14.3%
	Other type of milk	454	449	1.7%	-1.1%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>25 063</b>	<b>26 308</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
Fresh cheese (curd included) (tons)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>8 775</b>	<b>6 281</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-28.4%</b>
Other cheese (tons)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>2 485</b>	<b>3 383</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>36.1%</b>
Processed and smoked cheese (tons)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>1 550</b>	<b>1 605</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
Other products (tons)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>391.3%</b>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatics Department, Activity of the dairies

### Milk production and distribution in Bulgaria

Table 8

Milk production and distribution in Bulgaria in 2023 (thousand litres)		
Type of distribution	Total milk	Of which cows' milk
Processed in the dairy enterprises	<b>673 699</b>	<b>633 466</b>
Direct sales, own consumption and other uses in farms	118 058	72 152
<b>Total milk production:</b>	<b>791 757</b>	<b>705 618</b>

Registered farmers and dairy processing enterprises under Regulation No. 26/2010 on the specific requirements for direct supplies of small quantities of raw materials and food of animal origin sold a total of 38 854 thousand litres of raw or processed milk, of which 28 069 thousand litres were cows' milk (72%) and 6 200 thousand litres ewes' milk (16%).

Raw milk sold directly to consumers is 30 276 thousand litres, and processed milk is 8 578 thousand litres. 892 tons white brine cheese, 136 tons yellow cheese, 815 tons yoghurt and other dairy products are produced.

## Methodological notes

**Purpose** - The purpose of the survey is to determine the number of dairy processing enterprises, to collect information on the quantity of raw milk deliveries by type, the quantity of intermediate products deliveries used as materials in the production, the final dairy products, the legal status and the number of persons employed under an employment contract in the enterprises, the market distribution and the value of sales.

The survey information is used for analyses and programs in the sector. It is provided to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), the National Statistical Institute (NSI), scientific and industry organizations, Eurostat, FAO, etc. and serves for decision making on management level for the implementation of agrarian policy at national and community level.

### **Legal framework:**

- An ordinance on the statistical surveys related to pig breeding, cattle breeding, buffalo breeding, sheep breeding, goat breeding and to the meat and dairy production, adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 301 of 6.11.2006, published in Bulgarian Official Journal, No. 93 of 17.11.2006;
- Council Directive 96/16/EO of 19 March 1996 on statistical surveys of milk and milk products;
- Commission decision 97/80/EO of 18 December 1996 laying down provisions for the implementation of Council Directive 96/16/EO of 19 March 1996 on statistical surveys of milk and milk products;
- Regulation (EEC) 3924/91 on the establishment of a Community survey of industrial production (PRODCOM).

**The used classifications and definitions** are specified in Council Directive 96/16/EC and Commission Decision 97/80/EC; NACE 2008.

**Sources of information** – The survey was organised by the Agrostistics Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and implemented by experts in the 28 regional directorates. The regional experts conduct an interview with the dairy manager or a person authorized by him, fill-in the statistical questionnaire or receive the data via e-mail. Provided with password access to the agrostistics information system some of the respondents filled the information for 2023 online in the agrostistic information system (ISAS) (51.1%).

### **Surveyed Statistical indicators:**

1. Quantity of milk transferred for processing, quantity of intermediate products delivered, quantity of intermediate products produced, quantity of final products produced, quantity of final products sold, value of sales (VAT excl.)
2. Legal status and number of persons employed under an employment contract;
3. Main indicators on milk and milk products – quantity of processed milk by type of milk (litres), fat and protein content (%), manufactured milk products (kg), quantities of dairy products sold (kg), value of the quantities sold (BGN);

**Respondents** – All Bulgarian dairy processors are surveyed exhaustively. The list of dairies was prepared by the Agrostatics Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, based on the surveys conducted on the activity of dairy enterprises in recent years and the register supported by Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA). All the enterprises registered with milk processing activities during the year are surveyed exhaustively. Newly created dairy processors are added every year, information about which is obtained from the BFSA register. The organization and control of the survey is carried out by the Agrostatics Department of the General Directorate Agriculture and Regional Policy at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

**Confidentiality** – The national confidentiality rules are defined in the Statistics Act. According to Art. 25 individual statistical data as well as statistical information that summarizes data for less than three statistical units or for an aggregate in which the relative share of the value of a studied parameter of one unit is over 85 percent of the total value of this parameter for all units of the population cannot be disclosed or provided. Individual data obtained for the purposes of statistical survey cannot be used as evidence before executive and judicial authorities.

**Accessibility and transparency** – data on the activity of dairies is available to users on the Ministry of Agriculture and Food website: <http://www.mzh.government.bg/bg/statistika-i-analizi/izsledvane-zhivotnovdstvo/danni/>, according to the deadline established in the National Statistical Program. Main results are published in the Results and Analysis series newsletter. The data are published in the Statistical Reference Book (Agrostatics Department) and the Statistical Yearbook (NSI), and also transmitted to Eurostat. Additional information, beyond the published one, for all characteristics is available and provided upon request observing the requirements of the Statistics Act.

**Distribution of administrative districts by statistical regions (NUTS 2):**

**Severozapaden:** Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Lovech, Pleven;

**Severen tsentralen:** Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Ruse, Silistra, Razgrad;

**Severoiztochen:** Varna, Dobrich, Targovishte, Shoumen;

**Yugoiztochen:** Burgas, Sliven, Stara Zagora, Yambol;

**Yugozapaden:** Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil, Pernik, Sofia-cap., Sofia region;

**Yuzhen tsentralen:** Kardzhali, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Smolyan, Haskovo.

*The publication was editorially completed on 26.06.2024*

Editor:  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatics Department

*For more information:  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agrostatics Department*

E-mail: [agrostat@mzh.government.bg](mailto:agrostat@mzh.government.bg)  
Web site of Ministry of Agriculture and Food –  
<http://www.mzh.government.bg>