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**Atmanirbhar Bharat plan will boost  
dairy sector, says KMF chief**

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) has praised the Centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat plan under which Rs 15,000 crore has been allocated for setting up infrastructure in dairy processing and cattle feed manufacturing, and another Rs 13,343 crore allotted for the livestock disease control programme.

Balachandra Jarkiholi, the chairperson of KMF, which is India's second-largest milk union, said the fiscal stimulus would benefit lakhs of farmers in the animal husbandry sector in Karnataka.

Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the market witnessed a sudden fall in the demand for milk and milk products, resulting in huge unsold stocks. Considering that the unsold stock would affect payments to dairy farmers, the central government, in consultation with milk unions across the country, announced the stimulus and agreed to bear the interest charges on the working capital borrowed from banks, Balachandra explained.

The KMF chief said the stimulus would help provide constant market support and timely payment of dues and arrears to farmers in Karnataka.

"It will also support other activities of the dairy industry, such as the production of animal feed and the supply of quality and diversified dairy products to the consumers, he said.

Balachandra also thanked Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa for his decision to supply free milk to the poor from the excess milk procured by the KMF. At present, the KMF collects about 75 lakh litres of milk every day. Between August and September 2020, which is said to be the peak period of milk production, the KMF intends to collect 85-86 lakh litres of milk per day.