

## **DREEM Hub Hands Solar Demo Farm to Laikipia Dairy Farmers**

On Thursday, 26th February 2026, the Distributed Renewable Energy Ecosystem Model (DREEM) Programme, with support from the Kenya Climate Innovation Center (KCIC), convened over 100 dairy farmers, county officials, technology providers, financiers, and development partners at Solio Dairy Cooperative in Laikipia County for a Peer Learning and Farmer Exposure Event. The engagement also marked the official launch and handover of the solar-powered demonstration site to the cooperative and community.

The visit gave dairy farmers practical exposure to climate-smart technologies, including solar dryers, water pumps, and lighting systems, that can strengthen productivity, improve resilience, and increase profits across the value chain. It also created space for development partners and county officials to engage on next steps for scaling climate-smart agriculture and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the demonstration site.

At the cooperative, newly installed solar technologies, including a solar heat pump and milk chiller, are already improving energy reliability and reducing operational costs. Feedback from the cooperative pointed to significant savings.

“This solar-powered system has been a game-changer. We previously paid between KES 25,000 and KES 30,000 per month in power bills. Since its installation, this has gone down to KES 1,000,” said Maina Mungai, Chairman, Solio Settlement Farmers Cooperative.

The Solio facility is designed to serve as a practical, farmer-centered learning hub, effectively a living classroom for agrisolar adoption, where farmers from Laikipia and neighboring counties can experience clean energy technologies in action, compare solutions, and build confidence to adopt them in their own enterprises. Farmers at the cooperative reported already feeling the impact.

“I’m happy because we will not be incurring losses anymore. The extra amount we were paying in power bills now goes into our pockets. The villagers are very happy because the solar works even on days when the sun does not shine,” said Catherine Gathigia, a dairy farmer at Solio Cooperative.

Technology providers present at the event included Grekkon Limited, Irri-Hub KE, Sun King, Swirl Water Solutions, and Shiva East Africa, giving farmers direct exposure to

solutions tailored for agricultural use. The event was further supported by key DREEM spoke partners, including the Dairy Training Institute (DTI), KENAFF, CLASP, and Endustrial Support, reflecting the programme's ecosystem-based approach to accelerating agrisolar adoption.

Farmers who attended the peer learning session also expressed optimism after interacting with the technologies and service providers.

"I was glad to attend the event. I learned about solar drying systems and realized they are not as expensive as I had thought. In the future, I hope to purchase one," said Julia Wachira, a member of Kyeni Cooperative.

Across Kenya's dairy sector, unreliable and costly electricity remains a persistent constraint, often contributing to post-harvest losses and reduced profitability. For many cooperatives, high power bills and frequent outages limit opportunities for value addition and growth. The DREEM Programme is working to address this gap by integrating renewable energy into agricultural systems in ways that are practical and farmer-centered.

Through the Hub-and-Spoke model, the Solio demonstration site is expected to continue serving as a hands-on learning center for farmers across the region. The model combines technology deployment, peer learning, market linkages, and policy dialogue to help reduce the risks that often slow adoption of new solutions among smallholder farmers.

"These testimonials highlight the real-world shift from energy poverty to energy empowerment. For us, this is not just infrastructure, but a blueprint for scaling sustainable agricultural transformation. Through our Hub-and-Spoke model, the facility will provide hands-on training for hundreds of farmers, connecting them to the technology, skills, and financing they need to thrive," said Felix Mwaki, Director of Programs, Kenya Climate Innovation Center (KCIC).

As the DREEM Programme continues to solarize agricultural value chains, the Solio initiative is expected to inform the scale-up of agrisolar solutions across Kenya's dairy sector while contributing to broader efforts to catalyze climate entrepreneurship and strengthen resilient rural livelihoods.