

NEW CONCEPTS IN TECHNOLOGY OF DAIRY PRODUCTS

K.Y. Kaboshio*, D.O. Oshibanjo, B.R. Gandhi, Z.I. Aliyu, M.M. Getso

Department of Animal Science, Kaduna State University

Department of Animal Science, University of Jos.

Corresponding Author: Kachong.Kaboshio@kasu.edu.ng, 07066129247

Abstract

The dairy industry is undergoing a significant transformation driven by innovative technologies aimed at improving production efficiency, product quality, sustainability, and consumer health. This review paper explores state-of-the-art advancements in dairy technology, highlighting precision feeding and nutrition systems, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) enabled herd monitoring, plant-based and hybrid dairy products, precision fermentation of dairy proteins, novel packaging solutions, membrane filtration techniques, hurdle technology and sustainability-driven supply chain innovations. The paper discusses the implications of these technologies for environmental impact, economic feasibility, ethical considerations, and future research directions.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, hurdle technology, membrane filtration, Sustainability, Precision Nutrition.

Description of Problem

The global dairy sector remains a cornerstone of human nutrition, supplying essential macro and micronutrients along with bioactive compounds beneficial for health. Nonetheless, evolving consumer preferences emphasize ethical sourcing, environmental responsibility, and product diversification. Technological innovation plays a pivotal role in meeting these demands while enhancing productivity and quality (1). Recent scientific and industrial advancements have introduced innovations that enable precision livestock management, alternative protein production, and improved processing technologies. (2). Some of the contemporary concepts shaping dairy production and processing technologies as of 2025, drawing upon recent research to analyze their significance and challenges, are briefly discussed below.

1. Precision Feeding and Nutrition

Precision feeding technologies use sensor-based data collection and advanced algorithms to deliver personalized nutrition tailored to the specific physiological states and production levels of dairy cows. Systems equipped with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology combined with AI enable real-time formulation of feed rations, improving nutrient uptake and reducing waste. Studies indicate that precision feeding can cut feed waste by up to 18%, boost milk production by about 20%, and lower methane emissions associated with enteric fermentation, helping mitigate climate

change (3); (1). Additionally, precision feeding supports metabolic health by early detection of conditions like ketosis and acidosis through behavioral and intake pattern analysis, allowing for timely interventions that enhance herd welfare and longevity (4).

2. Automation and AI-Driven Monitoring

The integration of automation and AI in dairy herd management has brought about groundbreaking improvements in operational efficiency and animal health monitoring. Automated milking systems (AMS) equipped with multisensor arrays continuously track vital parameters such as activity, rumination, milk yield, and somatic cell count. Advanced machine learning techniques analyze these data streams to detect early signs of illness or stress, allowing for pre-emptive management actions, reducing disease incidence, and improving milk quality (5); (4). Additionally, robotic systems have been adopted in milk processing lines to ensure consistent quality control, enhance hygienic handling, and decrease labor dependence, which is especially important given labor shortages in many dairy regions (6).

3. Plant-Based and Hybrid Dairy Products

Plant-based dairy alternatives are gaining significant traction as consumers seek lactose-free, vegan, and environmentally friendly options. Innovations in formulation science and fermentation technologies have enhanced the sensory qualities and nutritional profiles of plant-based milks derived from oats, soy, almonds, and other sources. Hybrid dairy

products, blends of animal milk with plant-based ingredients, offer an approach to reduce environmental impact while maintaining traditional taste and nutritional characteristics (7). Formulation challenges such as protein compatibility and texture are being addressed through enzymatic treatment and microbial fermentation, improving mouthfeel and melt properties, particularly in cheese and yogurt analogs (8; 9).

4. Precision Fermentation for Dairy Proteins

Precision fermentation is an emerging biotechnological approach where genetically engineered microbes produce milk proteins like casein and whey in controlled bioreactors, circumventing resource-intensive animal husbandry. These proteins are identical to their animal-derived counterparts, enabling the creation of dairy-identical products with substantially lower land and water use and reduced greenhouse gas emissions (7); (10). Recent developments include scale-up of fermentation processes and regulatory progress toward market approval. Challenges include cost optimization, consumer acceptance, and regulatory harmonization across global markets (4).

5. Advanced Packaging and Shelf-Life Extension

Innovations in dairy packaging combine aseptic processing with sustainable materials to extend product shelf life while minimizing chemical preservatives. Biodegradable polymers and recyclable composites satisfy growing environmental concerns. Smart packaging incorporates freshness indicators, QR codes, and traceability features which enhances consumer confidence and compliance with food safety regulations (11;12). Nanotechnology-enabled active packaging, releases antimicrobials gradually, thereby further enhancing shelf life and product safety.

6. Membrane Filtration and Processing Innovations

Microfiltration and ultrafiltration techniques revolutionize dairy processing by enabling selective concentration and fractionation of milk constituents. These membrane processes remove bacteria and spores, improving safety without excessive heat treatment that may degrade nutrients. They facilitate lactose reduction and protein enrichment, catering to niche markets such as lactose-intolerant and high-protein consumers (1); (4). Integration of

membrane filtration with other novel technologies, like high-pressure processing, can synergistically improve product shelf life and safety.

7. Sustainability and Supply Chain Innovations

Sustainability has become a primary driver of innovation. Technologies focused on energy efficiency, water reuse, waste valorization (e.g., methane capture, biogas production, composting), and circular economy principles help mitigate environmental impact (7). Localized supply chains using digital platforms enhance traceability, freshness, and reduce transportation-related emissions, fulfilling regulatory and consumer demands for transparency and reduced carbon footprint.

8. Hurdle Technology

Hurdle technology involves the careful selection and combination of preservation factors ("hurdles") such as heat treatment, pH modification, reduced water activity, refrigeration, antimicrobials, and packaging modifications. Each hurdle exerts sub-lethal stress that impairs specific microbial functions. The synergy of these hurdles disrupts microbial homeostasis, stressing cell membranes, metabolism, and repair systems simultaneously, leading to microbial inhibition or death without harsh processing conditions that degrade product quality (13;14).

Pasteurization is the cornerstone hurdle, typically carried out at 72°C for 15 seconds (HTST) or at lower temperatures for longer times (LTLT). It reduces microbial load significantly while preserving taste and nutrients better than sterilization. Pasteurization combined with other hurdles allows milder treatments, retaining product quality (15). Combining pasteurization with cold storage ensures microbial safety and shelf life extension for fluid milk commonly consumed fresh (15). Fermentation lowers pH and introduces beneficial microbes while refrigeration slows contaminant growth, enhancing safety and preservation (16).

Hurdle techniques involving pH adjustment, reduced water activity, preservatives, and MAP yield shelf-stable paneer and cheeses with improved safety and extended ambient temperature shelf life (17).

Conclusion and Application

The dairy industry is undergoing a paradigm shift driven by innovative technologies encompassing precision feeding, AI-driven herd monitoring, alternative protein production, advanced processing, and sustainable packaging. Embracing these innovations allows the sector to address evolving consumer needs, environmental imperatives, and economic challenges, therefore positioning dairy for resilient and sustainable growth. Strategic investment in research, development, and policy frameworks will be crucial in fully realizing the potential of emerging dairy technologies.

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