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4000 km and 6 days in the bus there and back: "Dear heads of state, there needs to be fairness in the Common Agricultural Policy at last!"

Baltic producers call for an alignment of direct payments today in Brussels The European Milk Board urges for an efficient crisis instrument for the milk market

(Brussels, 13.12.2018): The Lithuanian Milk Producers' Association (LPGA) is demonstrating today in the European quarter in Brussels to demand harmonised direct payments within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Equal treatment and a fair CAP is the motto of the alliance of Baltic Farmers, supported by umbrella organisation European Milk Board (EMB). Their demands are directed at the EU heads of state and government, who are to discuss the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027, and thus the future of agricultural funding at today's summit in Brussels.

At 54-60% of the European average, farmers from the Baltic Member States receive the lowest direct payments in the European Union, in spite of the fact that their production costs are higher than the EU average. "A minimum payment of €196 per hectare in all Member States by 2020 was already approved by the European Council in 2013," points out Jonas Vilionis, President of the Lithuanian Milk Producers' Association LPGA, in reference to the efforts by Baltic producers over many years in favour of harmonised direct payments. "So long as it is impossible for us to make a fair living from the milk price, we producers will remain dependent on subsidies from Brussels." According to the proposal on the CAP reform presented by the European Commission in June 2018, Baltic farmers would receive about 77% of the European average by 2027. For Lithuanian farmers, however, this is not enough: "Baltic farmers must comply with the same environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards like in other EU Member States, but without the equivalent compensation".

"No second class farmers"

"It is high time that they stop treating us like second class farmers!" says Albinas Jusas, dairy farmer from Kaisiadorys, who has spent the last 3 days travelling the almost 2000km by bus to come and make his case in Brussels. Considering that funding for the second pillar of the CAP, which deals with investments, is also slated to be cut back, farmers would no longer be able to invest in their farms. "Low producer prices and insufficient direct payments spell the end of our farms!"

Cost-covering milk prices instead of subsidies

The Lithuanian Milk Producers' Association is supported by the European Milk Board, the umbrella organisation for European milk producers. "As long as farmers remain dependent on direct



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payments, it is important for everyone to be operating under the same conditions," says EMB President Erwin Schöpges, in support of the demand for harmonised direct payments within the CAP. "However, our goal in the medium term is for farmers to earn their living from the market. That means milk prices that cover production costs, including fair remuneration for producers." In this regard, European farmers still have a long way to go. According to data from Eurostat, the income per person was only 46.5% of the EU average in 2017. "In the medium term, it should become possible for producers to live off their production and not be dependent on subsidies," says Schöpges.

A stable dairy market with a crisis instrument in the Common Agricultural Policy

Especially in crisis years, which regularly push Europe's dairy farmers to the brink of ruin, losses are incredibly high for dairy farmers. Therefore, a functional crisis instrument like the [Market Responsibility Programme \(MRP\)](#), which would maintain a balance on the dairy market and prevent major drops in milk prices, is one of the EMB's main demands.

Kjartan Poulsen, dairy farmer from Denmark and member of the EMB Executive Committee, wants to see an effective crisis instrument become part of the Common Agricultural Policy. "Policy-makers must, one and for all, create the legislative framework that would allow quick reactions to market disturbances." Dairy farmers could thus restore market balance in a timely manner by undertaking voluntary production cuts.

Furthermore, the European Milk Board also stresses that the EU needs a geostrategic instrument, such as the MRP. "In light of the major uncertainty surrounding the consequences of Brexit, we need the Market Responsibility Programme to allow us to react quickly to geopolitical crises," says Poulsen. Without this instrument, the European dairy market would be left at the mercy of the expected turbulence.

Together with his Baltic colleagues, Poulsen calls on the heads of state and government to lay down a well-equipped and fair agricultural policy – and that for all farmers in Europe.

[Please find here pictures of the rally](#)

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