

# MILK-NEWS



## **Dear Dairy Farmers and Interested Parties,**

A year full of work and excitement is coming to a close for the European Milk Board. An opportunity for the Board to sum it up in brief. And we venture a cautious look ahead. But one thing is certain already: things are on the move in European politics and in the co-operation among dairy farmers. Perhaps more than the individual milk producers in Europe themselves realise. The EMB has provided some key input into the process of accelerating some changes.

### **2012, year of crisis**

For us dairy farmers, 2012 will go down in history as the second year of crisis after 2009. At the beginning of the year the milk price crashed throughout Europe. The rising costs of almost every means of production further exacerbated the situation.

### **Signs of a re-think**

This second milk crisis in only three years forced some governments of the EU to re-think. In several initiatives Poland, Spain, Portugal and Lithuania called for intervention in the market to prop up the catastrophic milk prices. The belief that the invisible hand of the market would control everything was dispelled by the recognition that policy-makers must guarantee a minimum of market rules. This development was underlined by rapporteur Michel Dantin's call to introduce a voluntary suspension of production as a crisis mechanism. In their statements on the CAP some MEPs even called for an extension of supply management until 2020.

### **Milk Package not enough**

The Milk Package, which was hotly disputed for many months, suddenly seemed to many politicians not to go far enough. Pity it took them so long to realise. The EMB had been banging on about it for a long time.

### **No end of EMB campaigns of action in 2012**

The EMB drew attention to the unsustainable situation of the dairy farmers with a whole series of campaigns on varying scales. In July, for instance, a milk lake was caused to overflow outside the European Parliament. And the EMB was also involved in the Good Food March to Brussels organised by a number of NGOs. The concluding conference in the Parliament became an impressive demonstration for a different CAP.

And finally the milk producers pulled up outside the European Parliament on 26/27 November with 1,000 tractors and 3,000 farmers. They sprayed milk over the building where the politicians were meeting. The point they were making was: the milk market is still on fire – it is cheaper to put it out with milk than water. In an emotional event on the second day the demonstrators remembered those farmers who had given up their farms in the last three years. In each and every one of these campaigns we repeatedly stressed our demand for a monitoring agency with flexible control of volumes to give the farmers cost-covering milk prices.

### **Commissioner Ciolos announces measures**

On 27.11.12, the second day of the big demonstration, Commissioner for Agriculture Ciolos

addressed the demonstrators. He confirmed without a shadow of a doubt that the Milk Package that had just been adopted was not enough to solve the problems of the milk market. He announced new proposals for 2013 to stabilise milk prices and give the producers some prospects at last. He said it was difficult, however, to satisfy demand. He ended up by calling on the EMB to put forward intelligent proposals.

### **On the right track – carry on the fight with conviction**

At last the politicians seem to have realised that markets do not operate themselves. What now has to be done is to present the EMB's sound proposals to the decision-makers. Vigilance is the word, though, precisely because of the evident readiness of the decision-makers. The big groups and their supporters in the farmers' organisations are already up in arms. They will try to prevent milk prices that cover the full costs and the requisite adjustment of the volume to the market with high added value. Despite all the difficulties the dairy farmers are on the right track. Carry on with all your might. It will be worth it!

We wish you a reflective Christmas and all the best for the New Year.  
Kind regards,

*The EMB Board*

## **European Milk Market on Fire: Two-day Demonstration of Dairy Farmers in Brussels**

The milk market is on fire. This is why milk producers from all over Europe came to Brussels to call attention to their unbearable situation and symbolically put out the fire on the milk markets. For a long time, milk prices have not been able to cover production costs and thousands of dairy farmers were already obliged to give up their farms.

(Brussels, 26 and 27 November 2012) Around 2500 members of the European Milk Board (EMB), the European federation of milk producers' organisations, as well as of supporting organisations are protesting today and tomorrow with about 1000 tractors in the European capital, in the framework of the demonstration "1000 tractors to Brussels". The aim of the protests is to call on decision-makers to take their responsibilities and decide on efficient rules for the market. In order to underline their demands, the dairy farmers will stay for two days and spend the night in a big marquee built in front of the European Parliament. "The fact that so many colleagues from all over Europe came to demonstrate shows how important the future of rural agriculture serving society's needs is for them. This future can only be secured thanks to a flexible supply management through a European Monitoring Agency", said EMB- President Romuald Schaber.

The current overproduction sets European milk markets on fire and the European Institutions have to take appropriate measures in order to distinguish it. This is what farmers wanted to show symbolically by spraying milk on the buildings of the European Parliament with fire hoses. A commemoration on the closure of farms in Europe is also planned. With these actions dairy farmers aim at calling the attention to their dramatic situation and on the necessity for clear and adequate measures to be taken in the framework of the reform of the EU's Common organisation of agricultural markets.

Romuald Schaber underlined that: "The closure of farms in Europe affects our society and has to be ended. It is caused by absurd overproduction, which puts pressure on prices. Actions to commemorate our colleagues who had to abandon their farm cannot become the rule."

The European Milk Board (EMB) is a European umbrella organisation representing 19 milk producers' associations from 14 European countries and a total of approximately 100.000 dairy

farmers. Around 75% of the milk volume in Europe is produced in its member states.

*Press release EMB*

## **Report on my trip to Brussels**

In his report below, German milk producer Gerd Arras from the Odenwald gives a vivid description of his experience of driving his tractor to Brussels for the big dairy farmers' demonstration. Gerd Arras is a member of the German Dairy Farmers' Association (BDM) – one of two EMB member organisations in Germany.

No-one can take my impressions and experiences of the 4-day tractor ride away from me. It was a supremely well organised journey and demo. We left a lasting impression in Brussels and on the way – we had many conversations with passers-by, the television, print media and radio. Many fellow farmers who were unable to come with us bade us farewell and then gave us a warm welcome on our return. This co-operation among us BDM members was simply fantastic. It does one good to gain so much recognition after this huge feat. It is marvellous, by the way, to drive along Germany's roads at 40 kph in wonderful weather.

We will probably have to attend a few more Farm Ministers conferences. And I'll be going along, too. Our active fellow campaigners in the BDM are a unique team it is worth carrying on the struggle for.

On arrival back home there are always pessimists who ask straight away: What did you achieve? Honestly, you have no idea what an effort it is to oppose political decisions that have already been taken. Organising majorities to have things our way! With campaigns like this we put the focus time and again on the unsolved problems of the milk market and force the policy-makers to take our demands on board. Nothing would get done at all if we didn't keep on bringing up painful subjects! Milk prices are always falling more than they rise, costs are going up and up, and the EU agriculture budget is being cut. Anyone who relies on subsidies and thinks they don't have to do anything for balance to be restored to the markets is guilty of gross negligence. What are we supposed to tell our children when there's no longer anything to invest? Of course it would be all well and good if these aims of the dairy farmers were to be published on Friday in our weekly journals, along with the photos and impressions.

My conclusion is that Brussels and market deregulation are tottering mightily, Fischer Boel has been driven out of office, Ciolos is on our side, and the European Parliament now has majorities voting in favour of continuing regulation of the milk market. But a few EU Ministers of Agriculture probably have to be replaced before they have majorities voting for our legitimate aims. The next hurdles are likely to be the forthcoming elections in the German state of Lower Saxony and the elections for the Lower House of the Federal German Government. Germany is the biggest stumbling block to a quick political decision on introducing flexible supply management. That is why we must not let up, particularly in Germany.

*Gerd Arras (BDM)*

## **EU agricultural market organisation: legislation now in the decisive phase**

Since late July when the Members of the European Parliament on the Agricultural Committee submitted nearly 2,000 applications for amendments to be included in the review of the agricultural market organisation, the Parliament has had its work cut out finding compromises between the different political stances. Whatever happens, the number of applications has to be slashed for them to be voted on. This work should be completed by mid-December, and the end of January next year, once the work of translating into every official EU language has been done, will see the final

decision by the Agricultural Committee. That will take the legislation process in the European Parliament into the decisive phase. What the dairy farmers want is for the MEPs to vote in favour of positive proposals like the voluntary delivery suspension.

After the vote in the Agricultural Committee there will be another vote, presumably in March next year, in the plenary, i.e. all 754 Members of the European Parliament. That is important, as the vote will be legitimised as a decision made by the entire Parliament. For the milk producers there is a chance that MEPs other than those on the Agricultural Committee – e.g. those from constituencies in their own countries – can be given their say and can support the farmers. That is why it is crucial now to convince politicians and MEPs at home.

Following the plenary vote there will be informal negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission with the aim of reaching an agreement. Convincing the Ministers of Agriculture in the Council will be an even greater challenge for the dairy farmers than it already is in the European Parliament, as there is an even greater bias towards the interests of the industry in the Council of Ministers. Only Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Spain have so far given express support. That is why it is crucial for the dairy farmers of Europe to stand shoulder to shoulder and exert pressure on their national governments.

When the reform of the market organisation will finally come into effect is hard to say. It depends largely on the outcome of negotiations on the EU agriculture budget. This budget is now being discussed in Brussels concurrently with the reform of the organisation of the agricultural market, and here too the next stage is the governments of the member states.

*Christian Schnier (EMB)*

## **The Caesar Prize for Advertising: the “Fair Milk Luxemburg” packaging comes second**

**The packaging design of the “d’fair Mëllech” brand Luxemburg came a proud second place in the awarding of the Austrian Caesar Prize for Advertising 2012 in the “Packaging” category.**

The Caesar Prize 2012 award ceremony was held in Linz on 22 November. Berthe Elsen, Member of the Board of Fairkooperativ Letzebuerg, accepted the certificate on behalf of her organisation. SPS-MARKETING – an Austrian advertising agency – had created the design for the pan-European Fair Milk campaign. Mr Norbert Schrangl, Managing Partner of SPS-Marketing, was therefore particularly delighted by the nomination: “Fair Milk has been a successful project in Europe for years, and this recognition of the Luxemburg milk packaging is a further milestone in and further confirmation of this success”.

Fairkooperativ Letzebuerg was set up in 2011 by 46 dairy farmers in Luxemburg. At the same time it started selling “d’fair Mëllech” products. To date these include “d’fair Mëllech” UHT 3.5% and UHT 1.5%, as well as “fair butter”. Sales are rising considerably – to the delight of all the members.

“Fair Milk” is a pan-European project of the European Milk Board (EMB). It stands for fair payment to dairy farmers, for healthy food and for a family farming culture. The project was started in Austria, but there is now Fair Milk in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg as well. The Fair Milk packaging is invariably in the respective country’s national colours and so has recognition value. The Fair Milk design is deliberately different from traditional milk packaging.

*Regina Reiterer (EMB)*

## **Slovakian dairy farmers' declaration of solidarity**

In a letter to the EMB, the Slovakian dairy farmers expressed their support for and solidarity with the big dairy farmers' demonstration in Brussels on 26 and 27 November:

Dear European Milk Board

Dear European dairy farmers

Dear colleagues

The Slovak dairy farmers would like to express their appreciation, support and solidarity with your initiative to organize a demonstration on 26-27 November 2012 in Brussels.

We stand by your goals regarding effective regulation of the milk market in the framework of the CAP reform – for a future-oriented and sustainable EU dairy policy.

Unfortunately we are not able to attend the forthcoming demonstration in Brussels, but we are ready to join future initiatives to protest against the unfair market and political conditions and measures which endanger the dairy sector .

Wishing you a lot of energy for your brave initiative.

Yours faithfully,

Alexander Pastorek, Chairwoman

Margita Stefanikova, Director

*Christian Schnier (EMB)*

## **Belgian NGOs and farmers' organisations in Africa support the dairy farmers**

The following declaration expresses the solidarity of Belgian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and farmers' organisations from Africa with the European dairy farmers' protest in Brussels:

Belgian NGOs and numerous farmers' organisations in Africa affected by milk exports have mobilised to support the milk producers' demands in the milk strike. The demand for a fair and remunerative price has always been a legitimate one.

By abolishing the milk quota the European Union has decided to do away with its most important regulatory mechanism. The European Commission with its new Commissioner now recognises the necessity of price regulation but does not know how to solve this problem it has brought on itself.

That is why international solidarity organisations and farmers' organisations from Africa support the milk producers' primary demand: regulation of the production volume and adjustment to demand.

### **The signatories, individuals and organisations:**

Thierry Kesteloot, Oxfam-Solidarité

Stéphane Desgain, CNCN-11.11.11

Corentin Dayez, Oxfam-Magasins du monde

Florence Burette, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières  
Jean-Jacques Grodent, SOS Faim  
Carmélina Carracillo, Entraide et Fraternité  
Sophie Charlier, Le Monde selon les femmes  
Luc Vankrunkelsven, Wervel  
Jo Dalemans, Broederlijk Delen  
Michel Sonet, ADG  
Florence kroff, FIAN  
Filip De Bodt, CLIMAXI  
Antoinette Brouyoux, Association 21

**African Farmers' Organisations:**

PNOPPA: Plate-forme paysanne nationale du Bénin  
FONGS: Fédération Paysanne Sénégalaise  
CNOP – Mali : Plate-forme paysannes nationale malienne  
CTOP: Coordination Togolaise des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles  
FIDEPS: Fédération de développement internationale (West Africa)  
SYNPACI: Syndicat national des paysans de Côte d'Ivoire  
USYPACI: union syndicale des paysans de Côte d'Ivoire  
Coopérative paysanne Bokunyole (Ivory Coast)  
Association de femmes rurales Minyoye (Ivory Coast)  
Association de jeunes ruraux AJRED (Ivory Coast)

*Christian Schnier (EMB)*

## **EMB Calendar**

**Please find below some of the most important events in December 2012 and January 2013:**

- 11.12.: EMB-Board Meeting in Brussels
- 12.12.: Meeting of the advisory group on milk at the European Commission in Brussels
- 13.-15.01.: Speech at the Semex Dairy Conference in Glasgow, Scotland

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