

Vote on the EU Milk Report: compromise for dairy farmers *The report shows positive approaches, but also missed key opportunities*

(Brussels, 07.07.2015) Today's vote on the Milk Report in a plenary session of the European Parliament produced a compromise for the future of the dairy sector. The members of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee had already voted on the Milk Report in June, incorporating numerous amendments. Today the entire plenary session voted with a majority in favour of the own-initiative report on the milk policy. Although rapporteur James Nicholson had recognized the problems of the dairy sector, he presented few concrete solutions for Europe's milk producers. The one-sided orientation to exports and purportedly new markets, and making investment loans available are by no means lasting solutions for the European milk market.

"It is all the more pleasing that the members of the Agriculture Committee managed to consider the demand for regulatory instruments in the report, enabling milk production to be limited in the event of a crisis by managing supply", said Romuald Schaber, President of the European Milk Board. He also viewed the requested strengthening of the Milk Market Observatory as positive.

"But the report needed so much more to improve the drastic situation of the European dairy farmers. More could have been done, especially with regard to minimum standards in contracts, in producer organisations' price negotiations for members of co-operatives, and in supporting producer organisations", Schaber went on.

Key opportunities were also missed with regard to a legal framework for supply management. The Agriculture Committee's call for such a legal framework and the call for a market index, serving as the basis for applying supply management, were unfortunately not confirmed by today's vote in the plenary session.

He said it was also regrettable that the EMB's Market Responsibility Programme was omitted from the report as a concrete crisis instrument. The disastrous milk prices throughout Europe proved how essential an efficient crisis programme was. Schaber further stressed: "As there is no end in sight to the weak demand worldwide, an immediate reduction in the volume of milk produced in the EU would be the most effective means of achieving an increase in milk prices".

It is all the more vital now that proper use is made of the report's positive approaches. The European Commission must be made accountable and establish general conditions that take the milk producers into account.

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