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## 1st June: World Milk Day – Milk is our life

Milk has nourished humankind since the dawn of time and has allowed our advanced civilisations to progress. Milk is pure and untouched, and it is now impossible to imagine life without it. Milk is a nutritive mix of proteins, fatty acids and lactose, together with folic acid and a number of vitamins and minerals. In fact, milk is one of life's simple pleasures.

**Milk is healthy.** Milk is diversity. Milk is also the 'daily bread' of hundreds of thousands of producers – it is the basis of their livelihood; it is their profession and their passion.

**Milk is universal.** As are the problems plaguing milk production. Dairy farmers worldwide might live in different conditions, but they all have to deal with very similar challenges. All dairy farmers across the world want, is to earn a living from their work.

**Milk knows no boundaries.** Milk is processed, refined and sometimes, simply 'powdered.' Too much milk leads to milk powder mountains. Milk is now also being adulterated with cheap vegetable fats. The EU is looking for new markets for these products.

**But milk is so much more.** Milk is, for example, solidarity. The European dairy farmers of the European Milk Board (EMB), together with fellow farmers from West Africa, recently spoke out against the disastrous consequences of the EU's liberalised agricultural and trade policy. African farmers travelled to Brussels with the sole purpose of showing those responsible that their export and dumping policies are very damaging. The message was clear: "Our local dairy sector has potential, but competition from cheap powder imported from Europe is destroying our markets!"

A disgruntled Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan reacted to these reports about the local dairy sector in West Africa by calling them "fake news", "misinformation" and "advocating for a policy of starvation." The West-African representatives, nonetheless, have categorically opposed these statements. In an [open letter](#), they have sent the Agriculture Commissioner a clear message and have struck down his interpretation of the facts point by point:

- *Competition from milk powder and vegetable-fat blends is a reality on our markets and undermines the development of the local dairy sector.*
- *The West-African market is of strategic interest to the EU agricultural policy and to European companies. European dairy companies are investing heavily in the growing West-African market. Local milk, however, is losing out.*
- *We want to make a decent living from our work. The European agricultural policy, focused on producing more and more at the lowest possible price, is destroying the livelihood of milk producers both in Europe as well as in Africa. We are not being instigated by our European colleagues. We speak for ourselves.*

### Milk does not like to travel. But perhaps Commissioners do?

In their open letter to Phil Hogan, the West-African representatives extend an invitation to the EU



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Agriculture Commissioner to come and see things first-hand. Hogan would be introduced to the reality on farms, in micro-dairies and on local markets in West Africa. The dairy sector in West Africa deserves to be given its due!

Even Brussels is doing something to mark World Milk Day. The city's urinating symbol – the *Manneken Pis* – will once again be dressed as an African shepherd and will turn the water in the fountain white as milk. With this action, the Belgian dairy farmers' association MIG and Veterinarians Without Borders want to highlight the need for fair milk prices around the world.

**Milk needs bright ideas.** An appropriate agricultural policy will help farmers in Europe and in Africa. But this urgently requires a legal framework at EU level, to avoid surpluses and align milk production with market needs. For years now, the European Milk Board has been calling for an efficient crisis instrument that could deal with potential market disturbances. The [Market Responsibility Programme](#), an instrument we have designed, would be able to flexibly adapt production faced with the threat of crises and would thus be able to ensure milk price stability. Our dairy farmers have not passed up on any opportunity to express their support for our crisis instrument before policy-makers both nationally and in Brussels. And they have succeeded! In the context of the agricultural policy reform, the Members of the European Parliament have recently expressed clear support for measures to deal with market disturbances, including voluntary production cuts in volatile market conditions. Therefore, it is now more important than ever before for the new European Parliament to build on this positive demand and make it a permanent fixture in the Common Market Organisation.

**In the name of milk producers everywhere, we celebrate milk as an important food and on the occasion of World Milk Day, we call for a fair and responsible dairy policy!**

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