

Dear dairy farmers, dear interested parties, dear Fair Milk partners,

We would like to devote the entire June newsletter to one of the EMB's most extraordinary projects: Fair Milk. It is the best example and living proof that fair prices for milk can be reality – a goal that the EMB has been strongly advocating for across Europe. Data from a study that will be published shortly show that the average income of farm managers and family labour in the EU milk sector is well below the minimum wage. The fact that the number of farms going out of business is rapidly rising is a direct consequence of this harsh reality. Faced with this situation, the pioneers of Fair Milk decided more than a decade ago to take matters into their own hands and started selling part of their milk production themselves. Fair Milk is the only European brand that is run by dairy farmers themselves.

I am constantly amazed at how the different Fair Milk projects as well as the people driving them have grown over the years. Today, they are not only one of the cornerstones of the EMB's political work, but are also directly helping to achieve comprehensive sustainability on farms. After all Fair Milk contributes to economic sustainability as the earnings from each litre of milk sold are actually passed on to the participating dairy farmers. This means that they are paid a fair price and can ensure the long-term survival of their farms. In addition, Fair Milk also encourages a revival of the direct contact between farmers and consumers. All the projects agree that this contact is essential – something that is underlined in the articles included in this newsletter as well. Present on Belgian, German, French, Luxembourgian and Swiss (fridge) shelves, Fair Milk sends a strong message of fair prices to the broader public – and thus fulfils an important political function as well.

In addition, Fair Milk also plays a huge direct role in our lobbying efforts as it is simply the best example that cost-covering milk production is very much possible and not just a pipe dream. In terms of public awareness, our Fair Milk ambassador, the Faironika, has become an important symbol with high recall value. She is effectively used in political actions, at protests as well as during meetings with policy-makers to draw attention to our demands and to reiterate our political message. "Justine", as she is known in French, was recently out and about in the EU quarter in Brussels on World Milk Day. This summer, she will be present at different actions, embodying our urgent call for significant improvements in milk prices.

I would like to take this opportunity to expressly thank the Fair Milk dairy farmers and compliment them on their amazing work. It is all thanks to you and your efforts that this project has enjoyed such broad success in so many countries. It also generates faith and hope for a viable future among young dairy farmers. Let's keep at it and continue to build on the complementary political and economic empowerment of this important project!

Sieta van Keimpema, EMB President

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Contact

EMB - European Milk Board asbl

Rue du Commerce 124
B-1000 Brussels

Phone.: +32 - 2808 - 1935

Fax: +32 - 2808 - 8265

office@europeanmilkboard.org

www.europeanmilkboard.org

News from Fairebel, Belgium's Fair Milk

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Eleven years ago, a few farmers came together to launch a Fair Milk initiative in Belgium. The cooperative was founded in October 2009 by eight farmers. Today, more than 500 farmers from three different sectors (milk, fruit and meat) have joined forces under the auspices of our cooperative. We have been able to increase sales year on year to reach more than 13 million litres of

milk in 2020.

This means that the members of Faircoop, the cooperative behind the Fairebel brand, have received a cost-covering price of 45 cents per litre for 13 million litres of their milk production, which is a veritable ray of hope for many.

Unfortunately, farmers have not been able to organise any tastings in stores since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. However, we hope that we can resume these activities soon so that we can, once again, facilitate contact between consumers and Faircoop's dairy farmers. These tastings in stores are the cornerstone of our marketing activities but they also force us out of our comfort zones – we farmers are not used to approaching people to sell our products. But it is well worth it because at the end of the day, this effort by every member (usually in pairs and with at least one experienced member) produces results. We leave the store with buoyant spirits because we have managed to sell a pallet-full of products and to offer consumers a real alternative.

Most consumers are already aware of the difficult reality on dairy farms thanks to the political actions in recent years and, at the same time, the awareness for fair products is also on the rise. Many were simply waiting for an answer in terms of a milk that would be the best choice, for a milk with which they could make a difference. At tastings, consumers enjoy our Fair Milk, are positive about the project as a whole, and, therefore, put other milk brands that they put in their shopping carts before back on the shelf.

We have already introduced two new products this year: Fairebel abbey cheese in slices (250 g) and Fairebel organic vanilla ice cream in 1-litre packs. Both products are available in Colruyt stores. Additional products are in the pipeline.

I hope that 2021 will, at the very least, be as successful as 2020 in terms of sales and that even more dairy farmers will decide to finally take charge of their futures and join the Fair Milk movement.

Daniel Hick, Vice-President of Fairebel

“It’s all about the faces behind the project”

Andrea, since when have you been active and what products do you offer?

Our initiative was founded in 2010. We started with two kinds of long-life milk (3.8% and 1.8% fat) and our product range has grown over time to include lactose-free milk (1.8% fat) and three kinds of cheese (semi-soft milk cheese, Emmental and alpine cheese). And as a treat for our young and not so young consumers, we also have chocolate milk and vanilla-cream liqueur.

What is the organisation structure like?

We currently have about 100 participating farms across Germany that are committed to the concept of Fair Milk. Our farmers are the face of the brand – they go to supermarkets, talk to customers and consumers, host tasting stands and raise awareness for our products at numerous trade fairs and events. The “fair food eG” cooperative provides the organisational structure. In addition to the participating farmers, consumers can also become members of the cooperative.

What drives the producers?

Managing to convince a retailer to stock our products is extremely motivating. After all, the farmers identify very strongly with the products and they are proud to see *their* milk make it to the shelves. They are also met with real understanding and sympathy from consumers at tastings. This is linked to the fact that putting a ‘face’ to the milk makes the entire situation on farms much more tangible: “We have to invest in our stable” is much easier to understand than an abstract “We need to stabilise the dairy market.”

And what about consumers, what drives them? Why do they invest in the project?

They want to contribute to sustainability. Once again, the faces of the project help significantly as they create a human link and generate trust, which are definitely important factors when it comes to investing. It also allows consumers to be actively involved in charting the general direction of Fair Milk as they can vote at our assemblies.

How do you reach out to consumers and initiate contact with them?

A lot happens through social media. For example, we have over 22,000 followers on Facebook. But we also have many people visiting our website. The fact that no one can make a living from cheap milk is generally known by now. But when it comes to outreach, it is important to leave the shadows of anonymity and, once again, direct contact is crucial. Of course, this contact is not everyone's cup of tea. We also see how this might not come naturally to our farmers either. Getting over their apprehensions and approaching consumers becomes much easier once they receive first-hand, genuine appreciation for what they do and for the high-quality products they produce.

And what happens next for Fair Milk in Germany?

We are currently working on developing more products and we are in a very exciting phase! Our new organic grass-fed fresh milk will be launched in June. In a broader sense, our goal is to increase earnings and further consolidate our position. We are especially looking to increase membership in the North and East of the country in order to better serve the demand from consumers in said regions. The main, overarching task of 2021 is to achieve a broader presence.

To wrap up: what would be your advice to producers who are toying with the idea of launching a Fair Milk initiative in their country?

It is very important to have an open, constructive exchange between all committed and interested parties from the beginning. And I am happy to reiterate that the other secret to success is the faces behind the project – it is important to share their story.

Andrea, thank you for your time and wishing you continued success with Fair Milk.

500 dairy farmers join forces under FaireFrance

© FaireFrance

Due recognition for the value of their products is a daily struggle for French farmers. When it comes to dairy farming, 544 milk producers distributed all across France have joined forces under the FaireFrance brand which was created in 2013, selling 100% French milk at a price that ensures fair

remuneration for producers.

Isabelle Rouyer, based in Saint-Paul in the department of Orne (ed. note: in Normandy, Northwest of the country) is one of the farmers in this cooperative.

You will find her in the fields in the morning, and in the E.Leclerc supermarket in the town of Flers in the afternoon: Isabelle Rouyer, 47 years of age, dairy farmer in Saint-Paul, Orne, divides her time between her 80 cows and her duties as board member at FaireFrance. A former quotation manager in the precision engineering sector for 14 years, she switched to farming six years ago and now goes to meet consumers multiple times a year at in-store events to promote FaireFrance fair milk. “Our strength is the fact that we are farmers – people are no longer used to direct contact with producers and they are very happy to see us once again in supermarkets”, she says. Isabelle Rouyer joined FaireFrance in 2019 and has been championing fairer remuneration for

dairy farmers ever since.

In-store events

Like Isabelle, the 500 farmers and co-owners of FaireFrance go to points of sale close to their holdings to meet consumers in person. FaireFrance is the only milk brand offering events in supermarkets. Buying a carton of FaireFrance milk means guaranteeing a producer price of 45 cents, when dairies only pay an average price of 31 cents per litre. “We talk to consumers about what is in our cartons – it is very important to maintain this contact, for both consumers and farmers”, says Isabelle, who feels like these in-store events are a real breath of fresh air. The farmers become ambassadors for their products and are present in supermarkets to promote their brand. FaireFrance guarantees that 100% of its milk is produced and processed in France.

A fair milk price

In 2009, farmers launched a milk strike to show their dissatisfaction with the milk price to their dairies. After this protest, it was no easy task to find a partner dairy but thankfully for FaireFrance, the Laiterie-de-Saint-Denis-de-l'Hôtel dairy in Loiret agreed to be part of the fight for fair milk in 2013 and has since been producing the cartons and bottles of FaireFrance milk that are sold across the country. Having only one partner dairy means that farmers located too far from the Saint-Denis-de-l'Hôtel dairy have to continue to sell their milk to their usual buyers. “Lactalis buys my milk at 32 cents per litre,” says Isabelle Rouyer. “However, the in-store events and actions that I organise for FaireFrance allow me to generate some added income.” Close to one million euros have been redistributed in this way to FaireFrance farmers in 2019.

In the long-term, the goal is to convince more dairies and consumers of the importance of buying fair milk. “France needs farmers to feed its people”, continues Isabelle. FaireFrance is available in over 8500 points of sale across the country. These are supermarkets that agree to reduce their margins in order to stock these cartons. Exchanges between farmers are also important, be it on livestock farming techniques, animal welfare or simply in terms of moral support. “I have absolutely no regrets about my decision to become a farmer. I think I have found a good balance with FaireFrance and I wouldn't change profession for anything in the world”, she concludes.

My journey with “D’Fair Mëllech”

I am a farmer’s daughter and since childhood, I have loved cows, livestock farming and milk. I completed my studies at agricultural college and then went on to work at Herdbook, a livestock farming service, for a few years. My husband René is a dairy farmer and we have three children. Together, we took over my father-in-law’s farm.

© D’Fair Mëllech

During the milk crisis, we jointly decided to “pour away” our milk, to stop supplying milk to the dairy for one week. We wanted to fight for the future of our farm and our family. In 2009, the Fairkoperativ and Fair Milk were founded in Luxembourg. Back at that time, we were on the ground during the milk strike, demanding a change from policy-makers and consumers. After all, a movement was taking shape and we had to contribute to it. It was clear to both my husband and myself that we wanted to be part of the Fair Milk adventure.

The first steps were taken by Fredy de Martines. He managed to find the Luxlait dairy who was willing to package our milk. Discussions and negotiations with stores regarding the sales of our products then followed. Our first product, UHT whole milk, sold well. At the end of the same year, we also launched UHT semi-skimmed milk, followed by butter in 2012 and fresh cream in 2014. In 2017, we expanded to seven flavours of artisan ice cream, four flavours of yoghurt and the first Luxembourgian brie.

I still remember the first time I participated in a D’Fair Mëllech event. It was at the agricultural fair, with a tiny stand. I got there, someone gave me a t-shirt and I was immediately welcomed into the great Fair Milk family. I then went on to participate in many such events. One day, they asked me if I would like to get more involved and help expand Fairkoperativ. I learnt to encode deliveries, draft committee reports and work on new ideas, like collaborating with Fairtrade Luxembourg. Thanks to this collaboration, we are now able to offer three kinds of chocolate milk that are doubly fair – for both the cocoa and the milk producers: UHT milk in 1-litre and 330 ml packs and fresh milk in half-litre packs.

I helped solve the early issues we faced with supermarkets. After a poorly prepared price increase, Luxembourg’s largest supermarket decided to stop selling our products for three weeks. We met with them to discuss margins: is it normal for a retailer to make a profit that exceeds the price the producer receives for their milk, given all the risks and uncertainty the farmer faces? Supermarkets put products on shelves and in the evening, they have the money in hand. Theirs is a calculated risk but farmers, on the other hand, have to assume the risk of rearing a heifer, insemination, and calving. The cow has to be given the best feed so that she can produce milk. This milk is delivered to a dairy in full knowledge that the price received does not cover production costs. These problems must be solved! We farmers are now able to get a behind-the-scenes look on commercial practices, especially those of large retailers, with our own “D’Fair Mëllech” brand.

Since 2013, I have been participating in all the committees. I was seated next to Berthe Elsen during the first Fair Milk Conference at Ciney and during my first meeting with the EMB. I clearly remember how my head was buzzing with all the information! I felt like I wouldn’t be able to comprehend it all. But with time, I have gotten a much better understanding of politics and policy-making. My involvement in the world of Fair Milk has only grown. I accompanied Fredy in meetings with ministers and large buyers for retailers. I was also with him at meetings with dairy managers and when we signed the contract with Fairtrade. As the Fairkoperativ has grown, so have I.

In 2017, we decided to make Fair Milk a more personal story. Together with our graphic designer, I visited our members’

farms. We took photographs to create panels that are now displayed at our stand during events.

Everyone has played their part and Fairkoperativ is growing. In 2014, we sold one product per inhabitant; in 2017, this had already increased to two. With sales constantly on the rise, our goal is to reach four D'Fair Mëllech products per capita in Luxembourg in 2021.

On a personal note, I want to continue down this path with Fair Milk and with everyone I have met on this journey over the years. In late 2019, this path led to me take on the role of president of Fairkoperativ. I have friends all across Europe who share the same dream: a fair milk price and a decent future for milk producers. Fair Milk is one big European family where everyone is united by their passion for milk.

Danielle Warmerdam, modified version of a speech during the Fair Milk Conference

2020 marks the first year of Faireswiss: let's take stock!

© Faireswiss

It's spring 2021 and Faireswiss Fair Milk is now one year and a few months old. The first Swiss Fair Milk was launched on 23 September 2019. We would like to look back on 2020, the first full financial year of Faireswiss! We hoped to sell more than a million litres of milk. And we did it! We ended the year with

1,071,271 litres of milk sold, including our different types of cheese.

The range of products keeps growing

After starting with 3.5% fat whole milk as well as five soft cheeses from the Grand Pré cheese dairy in Moudon, 1.5% fat skimmed milk was added to the range of products in mid-March 2020. Then came Le Petit Boisé, a sixth cheese from Grand Pré, as well as Cremo coffee creamer for the catering sector in September 2020. And finally, fondue half-and-half Gruyère PDO/Vacherin Fribourgeois PDO from the Vacherin Fribourgeois SA in Bulle in December. Don't miss out – currently available at Manor. The coffee creamer has also been available at Manor in packs of ten since the start of

February 2021.

Growing number of points of sale, growing support

After a strong start in Manor Food stores all across Switzerland, SPAR in German-speaking Switzerland decided to get on board in June 2020, together with PAM and Edelweiss in Valais – not to forget Aligro and culturefood as well as innumerable local food stores. Together with the Lausanne university hospital (CHUV), day-care centres, company restaurants (Novae, Eldora), restaurants and cafés, we have about 400 points of sale and support all across Switzerland! Great collaborations have also come to be with farmy.ch, labelbleu.ch, Maison Chocola'Thé, Intchiè No in Sion, to just name a few.

Awards

We received two PERL awards (Lausanne Region Entrepreneur's Award) at the beginning of the summer as well the Loterie Romande award in the context of the *Semaine du Goût* (Flavour Week) in September 2020. In fact, we were partners at the *Semaine du Goût* and we hosted stands at the Lausanne and Vevey markets during this period to present our project to the public.

60 cooperative milk producers

In early January 2021, an additional 21 milk producers spread over German and French-speaking Switzerland joined the cooperative: a warm welcome to them all! We are now a total of 60 producers. Many more are on the waiting list – incorporating new members must be done progressively.

Growth in German-speaking Switzerland remains slow. We now have someone managing the German contents for our social media presence. Slowly but surely, the project is gaining notoriety. We would like to thank everyone – our consumers, processors, distributors, media representatives and farmers! Let's continue this beautiful journey in 2021!

Visit [our website](#)

Find us on [Facebook](#)

Find us on [Instagram](#)

Anne Chenevard, President, and Berthe Darras, Secretary of Faireswiss

July's golden highlight: the Fair Milk Conference in Luxembourg

*The year's most important Fair Milk event is just around the corner: the **International Fair Milk Conference** will be held on 2 July as part of the Foire Agricole agricultural trade fair in Ettelbruck, Luxembourg. But why is this event so significant? The conference highlights and strengthens the cohesion, cooperation and solidarity among dairy farmers that stretches beyond national boundaries.*

© FaireFrance

The dairy farmers share the experience of cost shortfalls when it comes to milk price, but they are also united by the pride of having taken things into their own hands and having created a sustainable alternative for and by farmers. At the same time, they can further strengthen contacts with consumers and get them directly involved in the project. In addition to all of this, there is yet another reason to celebrate this time around: the Luxembourgian D'Fair Mëllech project is turning ten!

The **International Fair Milk Conference** is not only relevant for the here and now, but also offers opportunities for exchange on future-oriented issues with colleagues from partner countries. Advice and experiences in confronting the challenges of Fair Milk are readily shared. In fact, new ideas and activities to bring the project forward often emerge from the informal discussions during this event.

After the festive opening on 2 July, there will be presentations about the different projects offering fairer and more local milk. Many Fair Milk members and enthusiasts are eagerly awaiting this year's presentations on projects from Mali and Burkina Faso. After all, Fair Milk solidarity has now extended beyond Europe to West Africa.

The highlight of the conference will definitely be the awards ceremony for the Golden Faironika. We are sure that you are waiting to see who from politics, agriculture and civil society will be rewarded this year for their extraordinary contributions to the dairy sector.

To ensure that everyone stays in good spirits during the conference (and the festivities), we have not forgotten about refreshments. The popular product tastings will take place this year once again. You will have the opportunity to exchange ideas while enjoying milk, yoghurt, cheese, ice cream and other delicious products from all over Europe. And who knows, maybe a product from one of the partner projects will inspire you to launch a new range of products yourself or the conference might be start of a new Fair Milk project in yet another country!

If you would like to [participate](#) and in order to ensure smooth organisation, please register by 20 June 2021 by writing to danielle.warmerdam@fairmellech.lu.

Conference address: Foire Agricole, Rue du Deich, 9002 Ettelbruck, Luxembourg

Discover [here](#) the invitation video to the Fair Milk Conference!

The EMB Team

Fair Milk on social media

© Pixabay, Thomas Ulrich The "Fair Milk" projects are very active on social media, too. Would you like to know more? Here are just some highlights from our Fair Milk countries:

Switzerland

Tour Faireswiss
Alpage Wimpfel

France

Solidarity with a milk carton

Luxembourg

Dat as eis #FAIRMËLLECH The dairy farmers' brand

Germany

Belgium

EMB, Europe

10 years of Fairebel Fair Milk family

B-1040 Bruxelles

Tel: +32 (0)2808 1935

Fax: +32 (0)2808 8265

Mail: office@europeanmilkboard.org

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