

## Dear dairy farmers, dear interested parties,

### Drastic times call for drastic measures

The pictures from Sardinia cannot leave you indifferent: In mid-February, sheep-milk farmers on the Italian island poured thousands of litres of milk on the streets after prices dropped to an unacceptable level. Most recently, the price paid by dairies for a litre of sheep's milk was 60 cents – significantly below production costs. In order to increase the pressure on processors and policy-makers, sheep farmers decided to stop deliveries without further ado and to pour away their milk instead.

As an Italian (and European) milk producer, I can only express my solidarity for Sardinia's farmers. Milk has its value – our work has its price! Ten years ago, during the crisis year that was 2009, our colleagues in France and Belgium sprayed their milk away on their farms in order to draw attention to the unsustainable situation on the dairy market. Since its founding, the European Milk Board (EMB) has always campaigned for fair prices and a fair income for farmers. That is a basic requirement to keep the dairy sector alive in all regions in Europe in the long term.

EU policy is changing, but very slowly. The EU Directive on unfair trading practices was adopted in mid-March by the plenary session of the European Parliament. This is an important step to ensure better protection for producers in the food supply chain.

Intervention stocks have now been reduced by 99%. Agriculture Commissioner Hogan boasts that the almost 400,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder stocks *"have been prudently released, maintaining market balance and supporting the recovery of the dairy sector, following the 2015-2016 market crisis."* He, however, forgets to mention that the European Commission was greatly responsible for the previous market crisis: powder stocks mainly piled up due to the European Commission implementing the wrong measures or taking too long to react. The fact that the milk powder stocks were sold off at prices well below intervention level during the tendering process is also something that is swept under the rug. There is no information available about those selling and buying the intervention powder – this process has been anything but transparent!

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform is an opportunity to implement fair conditions for us milk producers. Three reports related to the CAP are currently being discussed in the European Parliament. The future of agriculture is on the line. The MEPs in the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament have submitted several hundred amendments to the report on the Common Market Organisation, including constructive proposals like *"voluntary volume reduction to counteract market disturbances"*.

A well-equipped EU agricultural policy could make such drastic actions by milk producers a thing of the past!

*Roberto Cavaliere, EMB Executive Committee member and President of APL Italy*

### EMB Newsletter March/April 2019

- Germany: Sector strategy 2030
  - Meat consumption and greenhouse gases
  - "Die faire Milch" introduces area-based dairy farming
  - Ministerial farm visit – interview with Boris Gondouin
  - "My milk is local" - campaign week from 8 to 12 April 2019
- You can find us on Facebook

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## Germany: Sector strategy 2030

At its recent symposium in January 2019, the BDM e.V. presented its strategy for the dairy sector. The aim is to reorganise the dairy market so as to significantly strengthen the position of dairy farmers, thus leading to much higher value creation and an end of systemic crises.

As the first step on this path, crises need to be effectively addressed. In this regard, BDM e.V. has come up with the dairy market crisis management programme in recent years, which effectively counteracts crises through market-aligned delivery conditions for milk producers. Article 148 of the Common Market Regulation must also be transposed into national law as it deals with the relationship between milk producers and dairies. In addition to this step, an interbranch organisation must be created for dairy farmers. It is important that this organisation is only open to dairy farmers and that dairies are not members because it would otherwise block itself and be unable to have the desired effect. The most important function of the interbranch organisation would be to take over the management of crisis instruments.

As a last step, the direct contractual relations between individual milk producers and dairy companies should be decoupled. Milk sales should be the future responsibility of the interbranch organisation, with the involvement of milk producer associations.

### Even stricter rules on fertiliser use

The EU has asked the German Federal Government to close the loopholes in German fertilizer law that, according to Brussels, still continue to exist, and to thus ensure more effective groundwater protection. The new measures that have been jointly approved by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal Ministry of the Environment represent a significant tightening of the current rules. They include especially strict targets for areas with high nitrate pollution (red zones). This includes compulsory catch crop cultivation before summer crops as well as a ban on autumn application for winter barley and winter rape. Furthermore, the applicable set points to determine fertiliser requirement must be 20% lower in the so-called red zones as compared to less polluted areas. Finally, compliance with the annual nitrogen threshold of 170kg/hectare for organic fertilisers shall no longer be determined on the basis of average values, but be parcel-based. Generally speaking, the federal states shall have more room for manoeuvre in the red zones to implement more comprehensive measures to reduce nitrate pollution.

*Johannes Fritz, Bundesverband Deutscher Milchviehalter BDM e.V.*

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## Meat consumption and greenhouse gases

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*The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency PBL has finally published the real climate gains of halving meat consumption on their website. Such a reduction across Europe would lead to a reduction of 2 to 4 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions, depending on the type of meat (chicken, pork or*

*beef) that would still be consumed.*

The Agency had originally stated publicly that the climate gains would be between 25 and 40 per cent. Following an action by the Agri Facts Foundation (STAF), the PBL has retracted parts of their claims in recent months, however without mentioning the real achievable climate gains of reducing meat consumption – until now, and only after STAF took up activity on this topic

once again before.

### **Society on the wrong track for years**

The Agri Facts Foundation is happy with the envisaged result and the relatively quick amendment of the figures by the PBL. However, the STAF is also aware of the fallout of such significant negligence by the Environmental Agency, resulting from the publishing excessively high greenhouse gas levels

for meat consumption. As chairman of STAF John Spithoven explains: "There is a big difference between telling policy-makers and society that halving meat consumption will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25-40 per cent or by 2-4 per cent. Policy-makers and citizens trust the figures provided by the PBL. Furthermore, the Government has asked the PBL to produce the calculations that will underpin the implementation of the climate agreement. This means that we must be able to rely on the fact that the figures for agriculture and horticulture have been compiled carefully and reported with the required diligence. This was clearly not the case this time around."

### **Consumption of animal products addressed in climate agreement recommendations**

Halving meat consumption is considered unrealistic. The PBL's recommendation to the Government is to work toward a 15-per cent reduction in animal protein within the framework of the current climate agreement. In this case, the climate gains would be a 0.5 to 1 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

*Geesje Rotgers, Agri Facts Foundation (01/2019)*

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## **"Die faire Milch" introduces area-based dairy farming**

The German fair milk project *Die faire Milch* has become the first food brand in Germany to commit to area-based dairy farming. This means that there shall be an effective limit on the number of dairy cows on the operational area of a farm in order to further improve animal welfare.

© DFM

*Die faire Milch* has thus added yet another criterium promoting sustainable production to their already high-quality standards. For many years now, consumers have associated *Die faire Milch* with its sustainable production standards. The brand's stakeholders – all German family farms – commit, for example, not to use feed from overseas and to avoid all GMOs. In the light of ongoing discussions on the consequences of excessively intensive agriculture, the brand has taken a stand and announced that from now on it will implement area-based dairy farming.

As part of this future-oriented idea, all producers participating in the Fair Milk project commit to voluntarily limit the number of dairy cows depending on the size of their operating area. This will equally benefit both the livestock as well as pastures. This decision was jointly drafted and adopted in January 2019 by the consumers and milk producers who together make up the Fair Food eG cooperative. Background: Fair Food eG manages the *Die faire Milch* project and offers consumers the unique opportunity to be actively involved in designing the future and strategy of dairy farmers' favourite brand.

"We are proud that with this decision our brand has, once again, shown itself to be a pioneer on the German food market", explains consumer and cooperative member Ralf Ehret. "With this rule on livestock density, we can effectively prevent nutrient surpluses and over-fertilisation of agricultural land. The aim is to strengthen regional circuits in this way. Furthermore, this decision ensures that the cows remain healthy in the long term," continues Ehret.

Die Faire Milch <http://www.diefairemilch.de/>

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## Ministerial farm visit – interview with Boris Gondouin

© APLI

visit.

On 21 February 2019, the French Minister for European Affairs Nathalie Loiseau visited the dairy farm of Boris Gondouin, member of the Executive Committee of the European Milk Board (EMB) and of the French association of independent milk producers (APLI). On the agenda: a detailed discussion on European solutions for the dairy sector. Boris Gondouin tells us about the

***of the department Meuse?***

***Mr Gondouin, what brings a minister from Paris to your farm in the north***

A member of Parliament from my region, who we have spoken to on numerous occasions, told the Minister about this French farmer who is campaigning at European level for the survival of his profession and for a fair price for producers because she felt that he deserved to be heard. That is how the Minister ended up coming to my farm, accompanied by a delegation of elected representatives from the region and beyond – a number of members of Parliament and Senators, as well as the Prefect of the department and Head of the Departmental Directorate for Land (DDT). My associate Gerald Rouvroy and I received them on my farm together with Sylvain Louis, president of APLI, and Jean-Luc Prevot, president of the fair milk brand

Fairefrance.

***What issues did you discuss? What message did you try to get across?***

The main topics of discussion were my work at the EMB (European Milk Board) as well as the European Fair Milk project. I told her about our struggle and how we have reached where we are today – abolishment of quotas, recurring crises and the founding the EMB as the result of solidarity among European producers.

However, it was most important for me to talk to her about potential concrete solutions, like our study on production costs, the Market Responsibility Programme (MRP), as well as the Fair Milk project. Frankly, it is not always easy to make yourself heard at political level, so we producers decided to take things into our own hands and create the European Fair Milk project – our brand Fairefrance is a member. This is a project created by farmers for farmers and shows that it is possible to sell milk while paying producers a fair price and strengthening the link between consumers and farmers as well.

***Did this change in location facilitate communication as compared to more 'traditional' meetings at the Ministry?***

Of course, it's a completely different ball-game. I was on my turf; I felt like I could speak freely and truly speak my mind. I prepared a short presentation summarising everything that has happened over the last 20 years. We immediately got to the heart of the matter and were able to have a constructive discussion. Meeting a Minister on your farm – now that doesn't happen every day!

Furthermore, it also allowed us to get our message across to all these people in one shot. The Minister was accompanied by a delegation of about 25 people, so it was really worth it! It is also much easier for us because it is not always possible to be away from our farms for an extended period in order to attend a meeting in Paris...

***What have you taken away from this meeting? What specific support do you expect from the Minister?***

I am very happy with how things went. The Minister said that what we do is extraordinary and that she would support our demands and speak to the Minister of European and Foreign Affairs about them as well. And who knows, maybe even to the President...

***Is the Minister already a client of Fairefrance or did you manage to win her over as a consumer of fair milk?***

She was not familiar with Fairefrance but was truly intrigued by the project. She seemed quite impressed by the fact that it was the farmers themselves who set up this project, thus taking their destiny into their own hands. Furthermore, the brand is also open to all milk producers, irrespective of their region. I won't be going to check in her fridge but I do hope she will be buying Fairefrance milk from now on!

***Mr Gondouin, thank you very much for the interview.***

Regina Reiterer, EMB

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**“My milk is local” - campaign week from 8 to 12 April 2019**

As part of the campaign “My milk is local” and with the support of civil society organisations, European milk producers and dairy farmers from six West-African countries have the pleasure of informing you of a week of exchanges on milk issues in Europe and West Africa to be held in the week from 8 to 12 April 2019.

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**Organisations taking part:** European Milk Board (EMB), Oxfam Solidarité, SOS Faim, Veterinarians without Borders.

## PROGRAMME

### Monday, 8 April 2019 (9:00-12:30): Session of exchanges

#### “The value chain of local milk in West Africa: what support for which sector?”

*Exchanges to share the experiences of development in the sector and to identify the outlines of technical and financial solutions to the persisting challenges, with the participation of West African and European co-operatives, dairies, international NGOs and state stakeholders.*

**Where?** European Economic and Social Committee (EESC, Room JDE 63) – Rue Belliard 99-101, 1000 Brussels

#### Registration and full programme

**Contact:** Koen Vantroos, Veterinarians without Borders – [k.vantroos@vsf-belgium.org](mailto:k.vantroos@vsf-belgium.org) or +32 (0)2 240 49 66

### Tuesday, 9 April 2019 (9:00-13:30): Round table

#### “How coherent Community policies can support the development of the local dairy sector in West Africa”

*Discussion on the influence of the policy of the European Union, institutions and companies on the development of a sustainable local dairy sector in Africa. Analysis of the proposals on European trade and agricultural policy in the presence of West African and European milk producers, representatives of local and European dairy industries, experts from the sector, NGOs, European and West African institutional stakeholders.*

**Where?** Résidence Palace (Maelbeek Room) – Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Brussels

#### Registration and full programme

**Contact:** Benoît De Waegeneer, Oxfam Solidarité – [benoit.dewaegeneer@oxfam.org](mailto:benoit.dewaegeneer@oxfam.org) and Vanessa Langer, EMB – [langier@europeanmilkboard.org](mailto:langier@europeanmilkboard.org) or +32 2 808 1935

### Wednesday, 10 April 2019 – Symbolic action and press conference

#### Press conference (10:00-11:00)

*Press conference on the consequences of European overproduction on local milk production in West Africa, with the participation of European and West-African milk producers. Presentation of the current context and outlines of solutions for sustainable milk production in Europe and in Africa.*

**Where?** Résidence Palace (Maelbeek Room) – Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Brussels

#### Symbolic action (11:00-13:00)

*Highly symbolic and “culinary” action with tractors outside the EU Council building, organised jointly by European and West-African producers and by various development organisations. Signing of a joint declaration in front of the media.*

**Where?** Outside the EU Council building – Rue de la Loi 175, 1040 Brussels

**Contact:** Erwin Schöpoges, EMB President – [schoepges@europeanmilkboard.org](mailto:schoepges@europeanmilkboard.org) or +32 (0) 497 90 45 47

#### **Thursday, 11 April – Visit, film screening and discussion meeting**

**Visit** by delegations of West African and European producers to the Netherlands: meetings and visit to a dairy farm

**Contact:** Vanessa Langer, EMB – [langner@europeanmilkboard.org](mailto:langner@europeanmilkboard.org) or +32 2 808 1935

**Screening of the film** “La planète lait” [The Milk Planet] and **discussion meeting** on the issues of the current situation of milk production in Europe

**Where?** Cinéma Galeries – Galerie de la Reine 26, 1000 Brussels

**When?** Thursday, 11 April, from 19.00 to 21.30 hours

**Contact:** François Graas, SOS Faim – [francois.graas@sosfaim.org](mailto:francois.graas@sosfaim.org) or +32 2 548 06 70

#### **Friday, 12 April (12:30-14:00): Presentations and visit**

**Presentations** at the European Commission’s Infopoint, Rue de la Loi 43, 1040 Brussels

**Contact:** François Graas, SOS Faim – [francois.graas@sosfaim.org](mailto:francois.graas@sosfaim.org) or +32 2 548 06 70

**Visit** by delegations of West African and European producers to Belgium: visit to the Herve Société cheese dairy and visit to the “Ferme du Bois de Herve” dairy farm

**Contact:** Vanessa Langer, EMB – [langner@europeanmilkboard.org](mailto:langner@europeanmilkboard.org) or +32 2 808 1935

#### **From 14 to 16 April**

Visit by a delegation of West African and European producers to Germany: meetings, visit to a dairy farm, opening of the photo exhibition “Milk doesn’t like travelling, but dairy farmers do!”.

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