

## Dear dairy farmers, dear interested parties,

Opening the tap to your milk tank and just letting it run empty requires courage. A lot of courage. About ten years ago, thousands of dairy farmers had to find the strength to perform this feat. Because they saw no other way forward. Because they could not envisage any future for their profession and their farms. And because milk is worth something. That is precisely why we decided to stop supplying milk and to pour it away or to spray it away in fields instead.

Dairy farmers in France and Belgium commemorated the milk strikes of 2008 and 2009 with impressive actions in mid-September. Our French colleagues organised a festival to honour the ten-year anniversary of the milk strikes in Normandy. In Ciney, Belgium, where millions of litres of milk were sprayed away in fields in 2009, we dairy farmers decided to strengthen our bond of solidarity yet again. Many colleagues from the neighbouring countries of Germany, Luxembourg, France and the Netherlands drove over in their tractors. We also received support from farmers working in other sectors, who are themselves advocating for a fair agricultural policy. Many young farmers were also present and joined their voices with ours.

I am proud of my colleagues, I am proud of this extraordinary European movement, and I am especially proud of the solidarity between farmers. The milk strikes were an emotional and financial balancing act for us all. It was a fight for fair prices. And it was our farms, our families and our future at stake.

In this edition, you can read about the actions organised to commemorate the milk strikes that were organised ten years ago. I would also like to invite you to the upcoming Fair Milk Conference on 12 October in Libramont, Belgium, where European and African fair milk projects will be presented. The *Golden Faisonika* will be awarded this year as well. She is a very special cow for very special achievements in favour of sustainable milk production.

We also have good news from the Fair Milk family – We are growing! Our Swiss colleagues have launched whole milk and five types of soft cheese under the brand Faireswiss. This brand belongs to farmers and guarantees them the income they deserve. Dear colleagues from Switzerland, welcome to the EMB Fair Milk family – we wish you every success!

On the political front, we have a lot on our plate in the upcoming weeks and months. With a new Commissioner for Agriculture and many new faces in the European Parliament, we have a lot of convincing to do. We are ready!

*Erwin Schöpges, President of the European Milk Board*

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## European milk strikes: Millions of litres & thousands of tractors

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In 2008 and 2009, milk producers, courageously and with a heavy heart, poured away the contents of their milk tanks to draw the world's attention to the absolute rock-bottom prices paid for milk.

*Ciney, 16/09/2019:* The major European milk delivery strikes of 2008 and 2009 were commemorated in numerous events held in France and Belgium throughout the weekend and this Monday as well. These milk strikes, which have gone down in history, led to milk producers in the EU moulding themselves into an extremely important political voice. A voice that was not fragmented and weak, but was a collective outcry that expressed the key concerns of very many European dairy farmers, loud and clear. A voice that might not have been able to ensure that everything that was necessary was implemented immediately, but has definitely put forth concrete proposals to improve conditions within the sector. These include the implementation of voluntary production cuts, which was an important political victory in 2016.

This weekend in France, participants in the 2009 strike from all over Europe made the start. In a large-scale festival in Normandy, they proudly commemorated the strong actions of ten years ago. Board member of the French milk producer organisation APLI and the European Milk Board (EMB), Boris Gondouin, commented: *"This weekend we are here in Normandy, France, for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the milk strike. It was something magical, but at the same time it was very hard. It is something I don't wish to anyone. But it was essential and it showed everyone – decision-makers, consumers, other farmers – that we can be united. And that if we no longer agree with the price of milk, at some point we could stop delivering milk, on a European scale."*

The European representatives of the milk producers then continued their journey to Ciney in Belgium to attend today's big rally with 1000 tractors. Just like 10 years ago, when 3 million litres of milk were poured on the fields, today milk producers from all over Europe have gathered here with tractors to demonstrate against the still unfair milk prices which do not cover their costs. They are joined by many farmers from other agricultural sectors who are also demonstrating against the current agricultural policy, which lacks fairness and sustainability.

EMB President and Belgian dairy farmer Erwin Schöpges says that the strikes were a very important, historic moment for milk producers in Belgium and in other countries. *"It was a unique moment of solidarity between milk producers and consumers. Such an action had never taken place before and we were very proud to have taken this step."* Sieta van Keimpema, EMB Vice-President, addresses the current generation of milk producers: *"Look at what has happened on your farm in the last 10 to 20 years. Look at your income, the situation of your family, the hours you work and how social your life still is. If you see that your life hasn't gotten better, even though you've worked so much, join the farmers who want to change something. And that is in your interest, which also corresponds to the interest of many other international farmers. Fighting together is the only way to improve our situation and a way against the disappearance of dairy farms that we have seen for years. Stand up, all dairy farmers!"*

In the eleven years since, the dairy sector has made progress. But we have also seen what happens when reactions are insufficient: drastic collapses in milk prices have continued to occur post the strikes as well. Family farms continue to disappear at an increasing rate, even though it is absolutely clear from a socio-political and an environmental point of view that these family structures are key. European dairy policy cannot do without a crisis instrument like the **Market Responsibility Programme** – an instrument that prevents such price collapses so that milk production does not become synonymous with a painful, loss-making venture. So that farming, once again, becomes an activity with prospects for the future – for farmers in general, and in particular for the youth. This was one of the objectives that motivated milk producers to go on strike in 2008 and 2009, and they continue to steadfastly pursue this objective even today.

***In many European countries, those who participated in the milk strikes are looking back on these events and their significance for the current dairy-farmer movement in Europe.***

**France: Sylvain Louis, President of APLI**

*2009 was a wake-up call for dairy farmers, where they realised that their production belonged to them, that they could pour away their milk to show that the milk purchase price was totally insufficient. A new vocabulary was born: we started talking about production costs, cost-covering prices, decent wages, volume regulation. The years thereafter entailed an on-going struggle without any guarantee of success, but if you do not fight, you have lost the battle before it even began.*

**Germany: Stefan Mann, Chairman of BDM**

*What seemed impossible became a reality: We all look back fondly and proudly on the actions organised on our dairy farms 10 and 11 years ago. In late May 2008, our then Chairman and President Romuald Schaber stood in Freising before 15,000 farmers eagerly awaiting the go-ahead, and explained to them that from this moment on, they would withhold their milk deliveries. This was followed by nine emotionally-charged days filled with exemplary commitment and increasing bafflement on the dairy sector. We all went above and beyond, sleep was scarce, and in addition to the milk delivery strikes, the interruption of milk deliveries from other EU countries led to a very challenging situation for the committed protesters all over the country.*

*A year later, in autumn 2009, the second heated phase of the protest was rolled out – this time not in Germany alone, but together with our friends in neighbouring countries. The images were even more powerful; we need only to think about the large milk spraying action in Ciney.*

*Without these heated phases of protests by dairy farmers, we would no longer be talking about the issues plaguing the dairy sector. There would have been no Milk Package, no discussion about the future organisation of the dairy market, no dairy sector study by the Federal Cartel Office, no pioneering decisions by the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament, and no debates about economically-sustainable dairy farming and so much more.*

*What began in 2008/2009 as an expression of outrage is something that we want to build on with our irrefutable arguments and our perseverance, which was initially considered impossible. Let us remain ever-ready to channel our anger into public demonstrations whenever needed!*

**Italy: Roberto Cavaliere, EMB Executive Committee member and President of the Italian association APL della Pianura Padana**

*We fought together for a fair price. The milk strikes were our reaction to an inadequate European policy. We withheld our production to demand fairer rules for the dairy market.*

**Luxembourg, LDB dairy farmers' association**

*A large number of farmers in Luxembourg were very motivated and joined the strike. Many poured away milk on their farms and just as many drove their tractors – tanks filled with milk – to the city and to Jean-Claude Juncker in the Ministry of State. The solidarity among dairy farmers was impressive, as was the solidarity shown by citizens for their dairy farmers. Many were willing to change their consumption habits and to be more conscious about what they buy. This is something that still prevails in Luxembourg: consumers ask for regional, seasonal products. All in all, a lot changed among dairy farmers 10 and 11 years ago. The fact that so many all across Europe were able to act in concert has left its mark on me.*

**Netherlands: Sieta van Keimpema, EMB Vice-President and Chairperson of the DDB**

*The resistance from cooperatives against their own members was extremely disappointing. However, the solidarity among the participating farmers was simply unbelievable*

**Austria: Ernst Halbmayr, Project manager at A faire Milch**

*I was there in June 2008 when thousands of dairy farmers gathered in a field in Freising, Germany, to hear Romuald Schaber declare: "I will not deliver any milk as of tomorrow." The same evening, we convened a Bureau meeting in Austria and decided to immediately join the action. For many, this was surely the most emotional moment of their lives as dairy farmers. For those who were not there in person, it is probably difficult to imagine how charged this period was.*

Today, everyone who was there clearly remembers what they did and has their own story to share about the event.

### Switzerland: Werner Locher, Secretary of BIG-M

*The milk strikes in Europe provided ample proof of the solidarity among farmers. Through a number of actions, it was possible for us to create awareness about the dysfunction of the dairy sector among the public at large. Unfortunately, the framework conditions have not changed significantly since then. The EMB is much needed, even today! We, Swiss farmers, are proud to be a part of the amazing European movement that is the EMB.*

A voice that, in the eyes of many dairy farmers, could surely go on to even greater victories.

### Photos of the rally in Ciney

EMB press release of 16 September 2019

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## What's going on in the European Commission and Parliament?

*Ursula von der Leyen, the future President of the European Commission, wants to restructure the competences of key positions in the Commission. She has also presented a full list of Commissioners-designate. Hearings with all prospective Commissioners are currently taking place at the European Parliament.*

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*The new Members of the European Parliament decide whether they approve their appointment or wish to ask the Commission President to put forward new names. Meanwhile, the European Parliament has already decided to continue with the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy by building on the work of the previous legislature.*

### The new European Commission

Ursula von der Leyen was confirmed by the European Parliament to succeed Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the European Commission for the next five years, starting this November. On September 9, she published her choice for 26 Commissioners and Vice-Presidents to lead the different services of this important European institution. So far, it looks like the new Commission will be politically more diverse than Juncker's team, with less Christian Democrats and more Social Democrats, Liberals and Greens (comparison [here](#)).

The **Directorate General for Agriculture** has been assigned to **Janusz Wojciechowski** from Poland. He is in the European Conservatives and Reformists Group and was previously a Member of the European Parliament in the Agriculture Committee. He is currently working for the European Court of Auditors. In a [Mission Letter](#) to Wojciechowski, the new Commission President has asked him to focus on concluding the negotiations for a new Common Agricultural Policy, to promote sustainability in agriculture, and to strengthen geographical indicators.

**Phil Hogan**, the current Agriculture Commissioner from Ireland, has been assigned to oversee the **Directorate General for Trade**. His [mission](#) includes leading the reform of the World Trade Organization, reaching a 'balanced and mutually beneficial' trading partnership with the USA, establishing an investment agreement with China, and working towards

'continent-to-continent free trade between Africa and the EU.'

The new President has also made big changes to the structure and functioning of the European Commission (see [link](#)). Frans Timmermans has been offered the powerful new position of Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal. The Dutch Socialist is expected to direct the EU's Climate Action services with the main task being to 'enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality target into legislation'. He has also been asked to oversee the Commission's work on biodiversity protection, a 'Farm to Fork' strategy for sustainable food, and reducing pollution in the EU. The Agriculture Commissioner will answer directly to the Executive Vice-President.

### Work starts in the new European Parliament

The European Parliament will hold hearings for all Commissioners and Vice-Presidents in the first two weeks of October, after which it will vote on their appointment. Several Commissioners-designate are at risk of being voted down, in particular Agriculture Commissioner-designate Wojciechowski due to an ongoing investigation by the EU anti-fraud office OLAF for the misuse of funds.

In September, the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament decided to build on the work done in the previous legislative period on the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy. Political groups are expected to work on compromises in the coming months and to put this to a vote in plenary before the end of the year. The EMB has been meeting with new MEPs for several weeks now in order to highlight the importance of supporting a crisis instrument to foresee and prevent further crises on the dairy market.

*Nicolas de la Vega, EMB*

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## Switzerland: Demonstration for a fair and transparent dairy market in front of the EMMI headquarters

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*On 17 September, farmers' association Uniterre staged a demonstration in front of the headquarters of Emmi, Switzerland's largest milk processor, to demand a fair dairy policy. As part of their action, Swiss producers also expressed their solidarity with their European colleagues on the occasion of*

*the ten/eleven-year anniversary of the milk strikes.*

The so-called "green carpet" was introduced this year and is supposed to guarantee a milk price increase of 3 Swiss centimes/litre. The indicative price has been increased to 71 centimes/litre! Where do things stand for producers? We demand this farm-gate price to be implemented for segment A immediately! We refuse the price reduction announced by Emmi!

- Furthermore, we want deliveries of segments B and C to be voluntary and without detriment to the volume of segment A!
- We demand that milk supply contracts include clear terms (in kg) on the quantities for each dairy market segment for a duration of at least three months!
- We call on the Federal Government to pay cheese processing subsidies directly to milk producers as required by law!
- In this era where we are fighting to control climate change, where everyone loves to talk about sustainable development, we insist that there can be no "green carpet", no sustainable production, without a price that provides fair remuneration to farmers for their work!

Emmi has accrued 700 million Swiss francs in profits over the last five years. The director of Emmi earned CHF 1,421,000 in 2017. For their part, Coop and Migros have booked profits of 473 million and 475 million francs respectively in 2018. These figures show that there is clearly no green carpet – only a red carpet for a select few. And all this while producers supplying to Emmi see no more than 50 centimes/litre. It is time to demand fair distribution of value added. Because food production is not a loss-making activity, it is indispensable and generates wealth! The only hiccup is that this wealth never reaches farmers.

Thousands of farmers demonstrated yesterday, ten years after the farmer revolt and milk strikes in France, to demand a future for milk production and a change in agricultural policy! We stand in solidarity alongside our colleagues in this fight, and call on policy-makers to finally act in the public interest and to improve the position of farmers as well as consumers in this market dominated by industry and large retailers. We need a vibrant, small-scale, sustainable and local agricultural sector, market transparency, as well as short supply chains that live up to today's challenges and align with the public interest! It is time to act!

*Press release by Uniterre on 17 September 2019*

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## Launch of Faireswiss fair milk products

*The Swiss Fair Milk Cooperative has launched Faireswiss fair milk, which guarantees producers a price of 1 franc per litre. Whole UHT milk and five types of soft cheese are now available in all 31 Manor Food stores in Switzerland.*

© Uniterre

The milk price paid to producers has been a hot topic for many years. It is, in fact, lower than the production cost, which is estimated at 1 franc per litre. Faireswiss milk products based on ensuring that producers receive this price are being sold now on a large scale in major retail establishments. This is an important step forward that allows consumers to play their part in supporting fair trade within their country as well.

The Faireswiss range of fair milk products was launched on 23 September in the 31 Manor stores in Switzerland. It includes UHT whole milk (3.5%) in Tetra Edge packs, processed by Cremo. And that is not all – There are also five soft cheeses from the Grand Pré à Moudon cheese dairy: Brie de Moudon, Bourg-Mignon, Cœur de Moudon, St-Etienne and Reblochon.

The official launch event was held on said date at the Cremo premises in Mont-sur-Lausanne, in the presence of members of the Fair Milk Cooperative, the Manor group, as well as the President of the European Milk Board (EMB) Erwin Schöpges. The latter represented the Fair Milk family already operating in Europe under the auspices of the EMB.

**What is the Faireswiss project?**

The Faireswiss brand is owned by producers and allows them to earn a decent living. This project will ensure fair milk prices for producers, that is, a price that covers real production costs to the tune of 1 franc per litre, which is 30% higher than the price currently paid. Each producer/co-operative member will be remunerated in the form of a bonus of 35 centimes per litre of dairy milk supplied. Fourteen producers are currently members of the Fair Milk Cooperative as shareholders, with their stake calculated on the basis of their supply volumes. This project is open to all Swiss milk producers.

The Faireswiss dairy farmers are part of at least two of the three Federal sustainability programmes and uphold proof of ecological performance requirements.

For more information about this project, please visit <https://www.faireswiss.ch/fr> and [www.europeanmilkboard.org](http://www.europeanmilkboard.org)

*Extract from press release by the Swiss Fair Milk Cooperative on 23 September 2019*

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## **“Trade in goods may produce wealth, but does not produce solidarity”**

© Frédéric Farah

### ***Interview with the economist Frédéric Farah about free trade agreements***

*Frédéric Farah is Professor of Economic and Social Sciences, a researcher affiliated with the Sorbonne's Laboratoire PHARE, and lecturer at Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle. Along with Thomas Porcher, he is the author of “TAFTA: l'accord du plus fort” (TTIP: the agreement of the strongest) and the “Introduction inquiète à la Macron-économie” (Troubled introduction to the*

*Macron economy). We had the pleasure of asking him a few questions.*

### ***Mr Farah, what developments have you seen in the free trade agreements in recent years?***

Since the European Commission's roadmap in 2006, the European Union has promoted a whole raft of “second generation” free trade agreements, which I find quite worrying. Unlike first-generation agreements, which were agreements about lifting customs barriers, nowadays in economic terms we have “behind-the-border” agreements, i.e. which will affect health, plant protection and technical standards. Along with an attempt to reconcile standards, predominantly on the basis of the principle of mutual recognition.

This also relates to the question of access to public services, which Europe says it preserves. However, the European Union itself does not know what a public service is. This brings up the question of what is being protected if they are unable to define the concept that is supposed to be protected.

Not only that, it is very difficult to follow these agreements, and that's what makes me afraid. I mean, they know how to sign them, but not how to monitor them. So, these agreements raise a number of questions.

### ***Who supports these agreements?***

The winners, and there will be winners. Of course, the food industry giants may win, for instance. But afterwards, beyond economic masses the question has to be asked what agricultural model is wanted? What economic model do we want? To take a French example, do we want the thousand-cow farm or something else?

Generally, though, the gains will be very little, even from an economic viewpoint. They will be over time, and ultimately not significant. What is more, in terms of standards, economists will not be able to say, for instance, if tomorrow you create the same standard for a certain product, let's say between Europe and the United States, how that will translate into more jobs.

***As you see it, what is the biggest problem with these agreements?***

These agreements will expose the beef, dairy and agricultural sectors in general to competition shocks that will be pretty devastating. As a matter of fact, in Europe the rationale is increasingly competitive, increasingly pro-market and less and less one of solidarity. In fact, this type of agreements – and this is what worries me – will exacerbate the competition rationales between nations, meaning what is left is “every man for himself”, if you will. In reality, it's always an economic matter. Even though I'm an economist, there's one thing I know: trade may produce wealth, but it does not produce solidarity.

What is also disturbing is that if we want production that is more environmentally responsible, less productivist, more concerned with natural global imbalances, to choose free trade with all-encompassing agreements, it's making things impossible. So, economic models are being made that are going to promote agricultural productivism, the disorganisation of sectors, the disappearance of small farms, to face up to increasingly unfair competition. In fact today, the European Union, in promoting free trade, with this ideology I call *competitivism*, instead of being a bulwark through globalisation, is the worst of its multipliers. *That* is the problem.

***Mr Farah, thank you for granting us this interview.***

*Astrid Sauvage and Silvia Däberitz, European Milk Board (EMB)*

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## **EMB milk price comparison: Little movement in milk prices despite falling milk deliveries**

*Even though milk deliveries decreased in many EU-28 countries in recent months, the EMB milk price comparison shows that this has not improved milk-producer prices in any significant way, except in France. Milk prices have not changed much over the last few months.*

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The available milk prices in August varied only between 30.02 and 30.87 cents per kilogram in Germany and between 30.04 and 30.70 cents per kilogram in the Netherlands. In the first half of 2019, milk deliveries in Germany were 0.7 per cent lower than the previous year, while in the Netherlands the decrease was, in fact, 1.5 per cent.

In contrast, producer prices in France in August spanned over a very wide range. They oscillated between 34.26 and 40.63 cents.

Irish milk producers were still paid 30.14 cents in May 2019, but they were then paid only 28.95 cents per kilogram in August. According to EU figures, milk deliveries in Ireland were 10 percent, i.e. 34 thousand tonnes above the previous year.

The prices included in the EMB milk price comparison for August were between 28.80 cents in Austria and 40.63 cents in France.



**Background:** The **EMB milk price comparison** is looking to ensure better comparability of farm-gate prices within Europe. The updated calculation model now shows the farm-gate price with and without dairy-specific bonuses and deductions. The standard values have been set at 4.0% fat and 3.4% protein for the same. Monthly calculations are also regularly corrected for subsequent payments.

*Karin Jürgens, Farm Economics and Rural Studies Office (BAL)*

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## Invitation to the 6th International Fair Milk Conference

@ Faircoop

*Together with the Belgian cooperative Faircoop, the European Milk Board is hosting the 6<sup>th</sup> International "Fair Milk" Conference. We invite you to join us on Saturday 12 October 2019 in Libramont, Belgium, where producers from Europe and Africa meet to celebrate the fair projects of both*

*continents together.*

The year 2006 marked the launch of a European milk brand that was founded by dairy farmers themselves. Today, "Fair Milk" can be bought and enjoyed in Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria and Switzerland. In fact, the brand has reached beyond the European continent and has been successfully introduced in Burkina Faso as well.

Dairy farmers in Belgium launched their own brand "Fairebel – the fair milk" precisely 10 years ago. The brand assures farmers cost-covering prices, but in addition stands for so much more: *For sustainability*. Fair milk prices lead to sustainable milk production and rural development, as well as the survival of family farms. *For solidarity and joint action*. Dairy farmers have come together to take their future into their own hands and to constructively work at improving conditions in the sector. Consumers also show their solidarity by buying Fair Milk products and thus supporting farmers in their efforts.

Dairy farmers from Europe and Africa look forward to presenting their projects and interacting with you at the Conference on 12 October. The "Golden Faironika" awards ceremony will be the highlight of the event. This award honours politicians, farmers and civil society stakeholders who have contributed significantly to improving conditions in the dairy sector and have advocated for sustainable milk production.

**If you would like to take part, please confirm your participation by e-mail to [office@europeanmilkboard.org](mailto:office@europeanmilkboard.org) or by telephone on +32 2 808 1935.**

The conference languages are French, German and Dutch.

***Delicious recipes to cook***

At the Fair Milk Conference the book "*Kochen wie früher - international*" will also be presented for the first time. Berthe Elsen-Melkert collected and cooked delicious recipes with Fair Milk from 7 European countries for 3 years. Await dishes such as Belgian onion cake with soft cheese, *Zürcher Geschnetzeltes* with Rösti or Austrian *Kaiserschmarrn*. Anyone who is interested can contact Fredy de Martines of the Luxembourgish Fairkoperativ at [martinef@pt.lu](mailto:martinef@pt.lu) or +352 691 998 831 and order the cookbook in German or French. (Price: 30€ for Luxembourg or 31€ for orders from abroad, shipping costs included).

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