

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

After the first edition last June, we would like to dedicate our entire October newsletter to Fair Milk again. I believe it is crucial that the EMB and the Fair Milk projects work in unison. Thanks to the cost study, the EMB provides all Fair Milk projects with a strong basis for calculating fair prices. On the other hand, the Fair Milk projects have clearly demonstrated that fair prices are possible. This in turn helps us in negotiations and talks with political decisionmakers, retailers and civil society.

It all started with the large demonstrations and actions over ten years ago. In many countries, consumers were coming to us, asking "How can we help?", "Which milk should we buy?". This gave rise to the idea of creating a brand by and for farmers, partly in close cooperation with consumers, who can now have a clear answer to their question. The EMB and its members have a leading role to play here.

As it is with successful projects, some will try to imitate or copy them to line their pockets. It doesn't take more than a glance at the shelves in European supermarkets to see this trend. You will find an increasing number of brands with "fair" or similar terms on their packaging. On the one hand, this makes the case for our years of struggling as more and more consumers are becoming aware of this problem, and the industry can no longer muffle or overlook it.

On the other hand, if you take a closer look, these are mainly private brands owned by retail chains or producers who offer a wide range of dairy products. This raises several questions: Do they pay a fair price for this milk and if so, on the basis of what calculation? Assuming farmers are paid a fair price, should we not take a step back and ask ourselves whether this is proof that retailers and processors are capable of paying a fair price – contrary to frequent assertions? Why do these companies even need a fair brand and do not simply pay a fair price for every milk if they know about the cost shortfall? To me, they are admitting that they don't pay farmers a fair price for their other products.

However positive the growing demand for "fair" products may be, we ought to take a closer look at who is just engaging in "social washing". Now that the health situation allows it in most places, we should remember one of the great strengths of Fair Milk and leverage it: direct contact with consumers. When meeting them, we can explain that unlike private retailer or processor brands, Fair Milk is a project created by and for farmers. It is a project where the entire product range has been fair since its inception. It is a project whose success was built on the consistent combination of active, highly involved members and political work on the price issue. Let us take on our pioneering role, move forward side by side and continue building this unique project!

Sieta van Keimpema, EMB President

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"Becoming involved with D'fair Mëllech is worth it."

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An interview with Jeff Thiry

Junior Manager at Thiry dairy and farm, member of D'fair Mëllech

Jeff, why don't you tell us a bit about your farm?

We own a small family farm in the little town of Schuller, in the South of Luxembourg, with around 65-70 Fleckvieh dairy cows. We raise fattening bulls, have laying hens and a broiler house, and in 2013, we also set up our own small dairy. We grow corn and grass to produce most of our fodder, and only buy in a small amount of concentrated feed – all GMO-free. D'fair Mëllech is the Luxembourg Fair Milk project and with the other members, we follow our specifications that were drafted with the help of an environmental organisation and make additional contributions to protecting the environment and the climate. We plant new trees and hedges, for example, or reduce the use of

fertilizer on some areas.

Can you tell us more about the Thiry dairy and how you came up with this idea?

My wife, brother, parents and myself work on the farm with three employees. For a long time, my parents had about 30 cows, and when my brother and I decided to take over the farm together, we had between 40 and 50 cows. We then wondered how to create more value on the farm to guarantee an income for two to three families. Since land is expensive in southern Luxembourg and we didn't want to displace our neighbours, extending the farm was not an option. That's how we came up with the idea to build our own farm dairy to create more value through direct processing.

And where does D'fair Mëllech come into play?

Our dairy processes a share of our milk. For D'fair Mëllech, we produce fresh milk and chocolate milk as well as different types of yoghurts and ice creams. We also deliver D'fair Mëllech products to schools, nursery schools and other public institutions, among others.

When and why did you decide to join D'fair Mëllech and what's your role?

We co-founded the project back in 2010. My brother and I were still in school, but our father had already been fighting for better prices. He always took part in the demonstrations and actions in Brussels. Back then, consumers increasingly started to ask how they could help and which milk they should buy to support us. Our father was a member of the board until last year, but he has now freed up his spot so that motivated and active youngsters can take over. Our entire family is committed to the D'fair Mëllech project, meaning that we don't just fill in our mandatory hours, but do a lot more work behind the scenes.

What lessons have you drawn from D'fair Mëllech?

Marketing a brand created by and for farmers takes a lot of work. You have to keep chasing down the retailers to get your products listed. I've also learnt that doing business with retailers is tough: you start to understand that the reason why farmers can't get a good price is because retailers are so harsh towards dairies. However, becoming involved with D'fair Mëllech was worth it because a good amount of extra money ends up going to the farms.

How are things going with the farm dairy and D'fair Mëllech? Have you come up with new ideas?

We have to work on making ourselves better known, to get listed by more retailers and have our entire product range on the shelves of the supermarkets that are already selling D'fair Mëllech products. We have new ideas and projects in mind for both Thiry and D'fair Mëllech. Nevertheless, I believe that we will first have to lay the focus on broadening and strengthening the roots of our successful project.

And as a young dairy farmer, how do you see the future? What advice would you give to your European peers?

Producing milk will undoubtedly be more difficult in the future, especially after so many years of low milk prices. But at the same time, farmers will always be needed. Perhaps we will not only produce milk, but whatever it is retailers and

consumers want. We might have to think about creating new products or establishing more self- and/or direct marketing channels. I also think that having several sources of income is key. Today, you have to use your head a lot more to earn money, and therefore you have to be creative and agile. I'm confident that my children will have a future on the farm, because these are attributes that unite producers around the EMB and Fair Milk projects.

Jeff, many thanks for your time and we wish you good luck with D'fair Mëllech and the Thiry dairy.

Simon Bauer, European Milk Board

Faireswiss: producers rolling up their sleeves behind the scenes

*When we launched the **Faireswiss** brand at the end of September 2019, our cooperative was made up of only 14 milk producers. Today, there are about 60 of us spread across Switzerland's three linguistic regions: the French-speaking and German-speaking cantons and Ticino. We thought you might like to get to know some of them.*

© Faireswiss, Anne Chenevard

Anne Chenevard, our chairwoman

"I have a 43-hectare family farm with 40 dairy cows in Corcelles-le-Jorat, in the Vaud canton, and I am the chair of Faireswiss, the Swiss Fair Milk cooperative. The activist dimension of our Fair Milk project is crucial to me. It is important that consumers be made aware of the key role they play as 'consumactors' or active stakeholders. When consumers purchase products mindfully, they foster **strong, productive and sustainable family farming** that creates jobs and added value. Consumers are also guaranteed high-quality food produced in a way that preserves the environment and animal welfare, and in accordance with strict production standards. I am a firm believer in the future of Swiss farming and the Faireswiss project is to me a beacon of hope for tomorrow's milk production in our country."

Patrice and Thierry Papaux, La Verrerie, canton of Fribourg

"We are Patrice and Thierry Papaux, father and son. We own a 32-hectare farm and are passionate about our work. Milk production is our main activity. Our more than 70 dairy cows produce more than 580,000 litres of milk per year. Our family owns approximately 140 cattle that are kept in a modern stable. On top of that, we grow corn, barley and wheat on five hectares of land. Alongside our passion for milk, we are also enthusiastic Holstein cattle breeders. Every morning, we wake up with a desire to take care of and expand our herd. Proper care is the key to our cows' long lifespan! The well-being of our animals is essential to us. Thanks to two alpine huts, our cows can graze in the mountains every summer. The end of their time on the alpine pastures is then celebrated during the 'Désalpe' festival in October."

Karl Lenherr-Kähli, Abtwil, canton of St. Gallen

"My wife Helen and I have over 35 horned dairy cows and 25 heifers, a couple of sows and boars. Hikers love our horned cows. They appreciate the fact that we treat our cattle with respect and that we are located close to the city. We were both brought up on a farm. I was originally trained to be a carpenter and later decided to become a farmer. Helen works part-time at the reception of a rehabilitation clinic. Following her father's sudden death, we decided to take over her parents' farm in 1997. We leased another property in Waldkirch where the young animals can graze every summer and enjoy the Tannenberg's fresh grass. In addition to breeding cattle and producing milk, we also grow fruits. Over 460 tall-stem trees give us a unique landscape where sweet apples, pears, plums and cherries can be found – which is a lot of work! Luckily, we are equipped with a funny-looking machine that helps us with the harvest, most of which is then delivered to the Möhl cidery. 2018 was a record-breaking year with no less than 70 tons of harvested fruit. Depending on the season, we sell sweet cider at the farm itself, along with freshly picked plums and cherries."

Safeguarding the future of dairy farming – that's what Faireswiss and its producers are all about. We look forward to welcoming more producers on board. The waiting list is long, and the more of us stand together, the louder our voice will be!

Find out more about us on our [website](#), on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)

Berthe Darras, Faireswiss secretariat

"France will always need farmers to feed its population!"

© FaireFrance

*French consumers have become more sensitive to sustainable production – despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the major disruptions it caused in 2020 . Here are some figures proving this trend: from 2013 to 2016, **FaireFrance** sold about 15 million litres of milk, whereas in 2020, sales skyrocketed to*

around 14 million litres in a single year.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the 500 members of the FaireFrance cooperative were able to organize in-store tastings and meet consumers. FaireFrance is the only French milk brand to offer so many events in supermarkets. "We explain to consumers what our cartons contain, and these types of meetings are important for both the consumers and the farmers, the latter becoming their own ambassadors and approaching supermarkets and promoting their brand themselves", says Jean-Luc Pruvot, a farmer from Parfondeval in the Aisne departement. Although he also works as an inseminator and milks 117 cows each day, he still finds the time to fulfil his

duties as president of the brand.

This cooperative's ultimate goal is to convince more supermarkets and consumers that buying fair milk can make a difference. Last year for instance FaireFrance signed a partnership with ALDI France.

Jean-Luc puts it very well: "France will always need farmers to feed its inhabitants." But what's in it for farmers? If you crunch the numbers, over EUR 1,400,000 were paid out to member farmers in 2020, enough to boost the morale of a sector that desperately needs it!

Maxime Lefebvre, FaireFrance project coordinator

Di fair Milch Säuliamt: success stories and lessons learnt

Di fair Milch Säuliamt has now been on the shelves for four years. We sell two types of pasteurised milk: a full-fat non-homogenised milk and a 2.5% fat milk, which can be found in the 12 VOLG supermarkets in our Säuliamt (Affoltern) district. We also produce 10-litre bags for bakeries. In 2020, we hit a new sales record due to the coronavirus pandemic, and the figures for 2021 are slightly lower. But the sales of our milk have been increasing year after year.

© Di fair Milch Säuliamt

VOLG's top management has decided that we cannot sell any other products from our assortment in their supermarkets. This is why we've planned events in front of their shops to boost our milk sales again. We will be setting up stands where an expert will be showing consumers how they can make yoghurts, Schabziger cheese and cream cheese themselves using our pasteurized milk. Two or three members of our cooperative will also be there to give her a hand.

Rolf Heer, member of Di Fair Milch Säuliamt cooperative, confirms: "We've had nice experiences with the public. Consumers are buying our products and are ready to pay more because they know that these are local products and that farmers get a fair price for them. I honestly have to say that I didn't expect people to be so enthusiastic. It seems that our commitment and presence in the shops are a real game changer." His only criticism or wish regarding the future is linked to expansion and availability: "We could step up our efforts regarding the retailers to get listed in more shops. But I think that we've proven that fair milk prices are not out of reach and that's already a major step forward."

Di Fair Milch Säuliamt secretary, Adrian Weber, adds: "At the start, I didn't believe that we could help farms and give them better prospects for the future, but our success eventually convinced me. The idea behind this is to show the big dairies that people are ready to pay more, and I think we've done a good job in demonstrating that."

On top of that, our involvement in this project has allowed us to better understand what goes on behind the scenes when it comes to retailers. Adrian Weber describes it this way: "We start to understand how hard it is, if not impossible, to get listed and what contracts and clauses are imposed upon us. We farmers don't usually deal with any of that. So many colleagues used to think that "they simply have to list our products", when in fact they don't "have to" do anything because they have other priorities and problems to deal with. To give you an example, we have to bear in mind that the term "fair" might be a hurdle that retailers have to overcome as it renders the rest of the milk selection, at least implicitly, "unfair". Adrian is not pleased with this and the blocking on the part of certain retail chains. "But at least we learn a lot, just like our project has also shown that people are ready to pay for high-quality and fair local milk."

Werner Locher, Chairman of the Faire Milch Säuliamt cooperative

The Koch family, a strong and active member of Die Faire Milch

© Koch family

The Koch family are from Harschbach (Rhineland-Palatinate) and are part of our programme. They jointly manage a farm with 80 hectares of grassland and 40 hectares of cropland. 95% of the fodder for the 60 dairy cows is produced on the farm and no fodder is bought in from overseas. In addition, their farm

has been GMO-free since 2008.

All year round, the animals can go outside. In winter, they can walk around an outdoor yard, and they are grazed on pastures from spring to autumn. No dehorning is required as only hornless cattle are raised and the calves are not fed any milk replacers. The Koch family also grow and preserve old fruit varieties and sunflowers on their farm and actively take part in community life

by volunteering in various organisations.

Oliver Koch tirelessly contributes to the [Die faire Milch](#) project. For several years, he has been donating milk and chocolate milk to the Ronald McDonald house at St. Augustin's children's clinic, where many critically ill children live with their families. He also placed the Fair Milk ambassador, Faironika, along the Frankfurt-Cologne highway to enhance the brand's visibility across the region – something that particularly matters to him with a view to the future of all Fair Milk projects. He is of the opinion that we need (more) visually strong

initiatives and actions, more activity on social media and possibly advertising tours.

Oliver also puts his shoulder to the wheel at national and European level. At the end of summer 2020, he played a pivotal role when several [EMB and BDM demonstrations and actions](#) were held in Koblenz. BDM and EMB members were able to count on him during the strident and mediagenic protests organised on the margins of the EU Agriculture Ministers' Summit in the Rhine and Moselle valleys. He offered his invaluable help for both the preparation and implementation of the event, for example as a contact person on site. He also helped out in the logistics and organisation, and arranged accommodation and parking spaces for the participants who came from all over Germany and neighbouring European countries. Last but not least, he provided a cosy place to stay for the European Faironikas brought along by the Belgian colleagues, which then set off on to embark on their memorable trip on the Moselle to catch up with the Ministers' ship.

When a catastrophic flood hit parts of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate at the end of July, it did not take Oliver long to react. Since then, he has been delivering milk and chocolate milk to the flooded areas on a weekly basis to support victims and helpers, who value every donation. For Oliver Koch, this kind of solidarity and mutual aid is a matter of course because this idea is also at the core of the Fair Milk projects. The next delivery to the severely hit Ahr valley, which is not far from the Koch family's farm, is already planned.

Andrea Münnekehoff, Die faire Milch

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

Vote for
Faireswiss!

Moudon's heart

France

An exceptional adventure

#Ceuxquifontlelait

Luxembourg

Germany

Mont-Saint-Méllech Cosy cows

The Fair milk song

Belgium

EMB, Europe

Fairly cheesy To fair toast!

Back to school Fair Milk conference

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