



EU Agricultural Policy: NGOs call for dialogue on production and prices New Commissioner must put responsible milk policy into practice

(Berlin, 01.10.2014) Tomorrow Phil Hogan, the designated European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, will face questions from Members of the European Parliament in an official first consultation. This is why a coalition of non-governmental organisations calls on him to advocate sustainable family farming. The Commission must stop supporting predominantly the agricultural industry, as has been its practice, say the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL, German small farmers' association), the Bundesverband deutscher Milchviehhalter (BDM, German dairy farmers' association), the European Milk Board (EMB), the environment and development organisation Germanwatch, and the development aid organisation MISEREOR.

“The 'growth at all costs strategy' is leading to a dead end. People in the EU want farms suited to their environment and not milk factories”, says Bernd Voß, Federal President of the AbL. “The milk quota system is to end next year without being replaced. But all the signs are already of even larger milk surpluses. The exceeding of the milk quota in Germany has recently reached record levels that are not in line with market demand.”

A responsible milk policy

Tobias Reichert from Germanwatch stresses: “There are hardly any political instruments left to react to imbalances in the milk market. The European Commission already has to subsidise milk storage as a reaction to weak demand in China and the Russian import embargo. By the time the milk quotas end at the latest, we might see subsidised exports as the next step.”

“Regardless of subsidies, though, the strong export drive and the inordinate increase in volumes is putting the pressure on the farm-gate price within the EU and weakening the dairy sector in developing countries”, says the President of the EMB and BDM, Romuald Schaber. He sees no security for EU agriculture in the orientation towards the world market, instead it makes the milk sector very vulnerable, as is more than evident from the current Russian policy.

Kerstin Lanje, a MISEREOR expert on agriculture, sums it up: “One of Hogan’s biggest challenges will be to come up with a milk policy that shows responsibility to society, to producers in the EU, and to the developing nations”.

So the AbL, BDM, EMB, Germanwatch and MISEREOR expect from Hogan concepts for how production and prices in the EU can be put on the right level: a level that secures milk production, gives farmers a fair living, and is acceptable in terms of ecology and development aid policy.

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