

Revolt of the dairy farmers paralysing Europe

More than forty thousand farmers in eight countries have stopped supplying milk. The politicians must act at once to defuse the situation

Hamm/Brussels, 16.09.2009: the ignorance hitherto shown by the European Ministers of Agriculture has resulted in a ruinous situation on dairy farms across Europe, triggering off an unprecedented revolt of dairy farmers in Europe. "Contrary to the milk producers' demands, the politicians increased the permitted volume of milk produced in an already saturated market, creating surplus production," is how Ernst Halbmayr of IG-Milch in Austria describes the background to the protest. "The catastrophic price collapse this caused is destroying dairy farms in every European country."

"The current policy is a failure. In desperation more than forty thousand dairy farmers in eight countries have turned to the last resort and have stopped supplying the dairies with their milk," says Pascal Massol, President of the French milk producers' organisation APLI, whose members and those of the OPL association had started the supply boycott last Thursday.

"The European milk producers are in active contact with one another. 130,000 dairy farmers in 14 countries are all organised in the umbrella association of European milk producers, the European Milk Board (EMB)", EMB Vice-President Sieta van Keimpema explains the link between the European dairy farmers. "The Milk Strike has to be expected to spread."

"The politicians must act at once to defuse the situation," demands the President of the EMB, Romuald Schaber. "The striking dairy farmers demand that the politicians tackle the core problem and implement an immediate reduction in the volume of milk to enable dairies to pay cost-covering milk prices as quickly as possible. We also expect," Schaber goes on, "the politicians to hold talks with us forthwith to discuss how European milk production can be geared in the long term to supply and demand so as to ensure cost-covering producer prices for the dairy farmers." We milk producers are prepared to shoulder the responsibility and control the supply ourselves. The EMB has drawn up a concrete raft of demands and already presented it to the politicians.

It is not only the milk producers in Europe that are suffering under this policy. Erwin Schöpges of the Milk Producer Lobby (MIG) in Belgium explains: "This milk policy is also ruining milk producers in developing countries. The reintroduction of the antiquated mechanism of export subsidies early in the year means that European milk is being sold at artificially cheap prices on the world market, destroying local markets in poor countries." That according to the European Commission the politicians have already wasted 600 million euros of taxpayers' money this year alone on the mechanisms of export subsidies and stockpiling that were long thought abandoned, gives Roberto Cavaliere of the Italian milk producers' organisation APL della Pianura Padana cause for concern.

"The survival of tens of thousands of dairy farms is at stake. On top of that there are a hundred thousand jobs upstream and downstream of milk production."

On our Homepage you can always find new information about the milk strike in the european countries: www.europeanmilkboard.org

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