

European Agriculture Commissioner provokes milk producers in Europe

Problem of volumes in the European milk market recognised, but no sweeping proposals for solving it from the Commission

Brüssel/Hamm, 18.09.2009: The dairy farmers' revolt caused by the catastrophic milk prices is growing day by day throughout Europe. Yet in her speech before the European Parliament the European Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel all but ignored the dairy farmers' concerns. "The Agriculture Commissioner is provoking the milk producers in Europe who have been protesting and striking since last Thursday when the Milk Strike started in France", explained Sieta van Keimpema, the Dutch Vice-President of the European Milk Board (EMB).

"But we still regard it as a success that the milk issue is top of the political agenda all over Europe", says Pascal Massol from the French milk producers' organisation APLI. Daniel Condat, representative of the French OPL adds: "The pressure on the politicians exerted by the magnificent milk strike is manifestly growing."

"It is positive that the European Commissioner recognises the problem of volumes in the market", says Romuald Schaber, President of the European Milk Board (EMB) from Germany. "And the proposal to remove quotas from production and set them aside in the reserve without oversuppliers being able to touch them is in the right direction. However, the Commission's proposals fall far short of removing surplus milk volumes effectively from the market to enable milk prices to recover to a livelihood-securing level and to ensure high-quality milk production across Europe." Supply and demand must be brought into line with each other as soon as possible.

Ernst Halbmayr of IG-Milch points out: "The 140,000 or so European milk producers in the European Milk Board drew up a raft of joint demands for the European milk market and presented it to the politicians. That is what they are fighting for right now all over Europe, aiming their protests at the politicians who organised the increase in milk production in an oversaturated market."

That is why what is needed is a European monitoring agency in which representatives of the politicians, consumers, dairies and dairy farmers regularly adjust the volume of milk to be produced, based on market analyses. The assessment of the milk market situation must not be left to the Commission or analysts with their own agendas; instead the milk producers and other sources must be equally involved. That is the only way to ensure that the interests of all parties concerned are taken into consideration.

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