

Press release

Many more than 1000 milk producers demonstrate in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg today „Change tack and support a fair agricultural sector”

Strasbourg, October 20th, 2010

1200 milk producers from many European countries came to Strasbourg with two hundred fifty tractors to encourage the EU parliament to initiate a change of direction in the agricultural policy.

„Since the crisis in 2009 EU policy-makers have not decided on any effective measures to save the dairy market. The contrary is the case as the damaging liberalisation approach was even promoted” says Romuald Schaber, president of the European Milk Board (EMB) in Strasbourg. „As the parliament has to now the right to co-decide on the agricultural policy it has the possibility to bring about changes. It can counter this liberalisation with a fair agricultural policy with intelligent rules for the market. Today we would like to ask the parliament to seize this opportunity” adds Schaber.

By staging this demonstration the farmers would like to thank the members of parliament who already support a management of volumes and prices that cover production costs. “We would like to ask the members of parliament who still hesitate to support us, to take the opinion of the civil society seriously and to back a fair agricultural sector.” says Schaber to explain the concern of the demonstrators. In this context he also points out the EU-wide debate where the European citizens made it clear that rural areas as well as security of supply are vital for them. They demand fair conditions of competition for farmers.

„Diversity, regionalism and a sound dairy production have no chance without fair conditions of competition” says Anton Sidler, board member of the EMB and the French producer organisation APLI (Association Nationale des Producteurs de Lait Indépendants). „We will see a massive loss of employment. Animal welfare and landscapes as we know them today will be a thing of the past with an unfettered market”

That is why the EMB demands rules for the market that enable an intelligent configuration of the market and prices that cover production costs. A key element is the creation of a monitoring agency that records the volume demanded on the market and adapts the production accordingly.

Prior to the demonstration a study on regulative systems in different countries was presented in cooperation with Martin Häusling, member of the European parliament and the Greens. This study shows clearly that: “an intervention by the state is required in all countries. However, not all forms of intervention are satisfactory” says Martin Häusling. The „Swiss interbranch organisation milk“ (Branchenorganisation Milch, BOM), an association with representatives of the processing industry, the retail sector and producers has failed in the meantime. The decisions of the BOM, such as an adaption of volumes to the demand on the market, were generally binding. The retail sector and dairies did not, however, implement these decisions.

„This is a cautionary example that the EU should not follow” emphasises Romuald Schaber. „An efficient system to manage volumes on the dairy market is indispensable for consumers and producers in the EU. The European parliament has the possibility to contribute immensely to its implementation.”

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