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1 June 2020: World Milk Day - Our vision for a socially and environmentally sustainable dairy sector

Farm to Fork Strategy must be further improved

(Brussels, 29 May 2020) Even though for us dairy farmers and our cows all 365 days of the year are about milk, 1 June – World Milk Day – is a special day for us. It is a day when we look ahead, with our vision for the future. We want to use this day to illustrate what makes a dairy sector good, fair, and both socially and environmentally sustainable. And to make it clear once again that the necessary framework conditions must be created by policy-makers.

The sector is:

- fair when milk is a product that is sold at a cost-covering price;
fair for those who work in the agricultural sector, when they are decently remunerated for their work;
- socially and environmentally sustainable when farmers employ environmentally sound production techniques, and the costs of the same are covered by the price – these costs are thus not simply passed on to producers.

For Erwin Schöpges, President of the European Milk Board (EMB), these conditions are not utopic or some sort of pipe dream. They can be put in place if there is enough social and political will to do so. “In all parts of society, the desire for change, for a more reasonable and fairer way of living has become very strong. The COVID-19 crisis has clearly demonstrated, yet again, how we are all dependent on each other and how important essential workers are to our daily existence. They are just as important as a more judicious use of our natural resources. It is clear that something needs to change.” This social push for a more sustainable and responsible way of life and production is a driver that can, at the end of the day, lead the charge in ensuring that specific measures are put in place.”

For the dairy sector, such measures should pay special attention to the following points:



The European Commission is currently trying to respond to the social call for more sustainability through the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. "The fact that the Commission has reacted to such a call is definitely a good sign – for sustainable development in the EU and most definitely for their own political legitimacy as well," says Erwin Schöpges. "However, in order to ensure greater sustainability, they have to get all those who will eventually be implementing their strategies on board. In the agricultural sector, this would specifically mean farmers."

But before anything else, farmers first need a framework that would put an end to the exploitation they currently face. This means cost-covering prices, fair remuneration and a truly better position in the value creation chain. It is also extremely important that farmers are not simply left to deal with the higher costs that come with stricter requirements. This would only worsen the current exploitative situation.

In this context, Sieta van Keimpema, Vice-President of the EMB, points out an aspect in the current proposals by the EU that begs significant improvement: "These important aspects are not given their due in the Farm to Fork Strategy nor the CAP reform. It is not clear how the situation of producers will be stabilised and protected from further deterioration." Sieta van Keimpema, therefore, calls on the EU institutions to give these points the consideration they deserve in an amended, improved proposal. "Only then can we say that the EU has developed an effective plan for sustainability," says the EMB Vice-President. She goes on to underline that the dairy farmers of the EMB, together with the EU, have an optimistic vision of the future, and are ready to share the responsibility of creating the framework conditions for a truly socially and environmentally sustainable future. The EMB has already sent the European Commission their [proposals](#) a few weeks ago.

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