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## **Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament adopts position on strengthening farmers in the food supply chain**

### **- an important step, but not a breakthrough -**

This week, the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament adopted the Committee report on strengthening the position of producers in the food supply chain. While the decision includes some progress, all in all, it nonetheless falls far short of what would be required for a real improvement in the situation of farmers.

A positive development is that the EU-wide pooling thresholds for producer organisations are to be raised. This opens the possibility of greater market leverage – provided these organisations are further strengthened and significantly more farmers join them. The confirmation of an EU-wide contractual obligation, as proposed by the European Commission, is also a step in the right direction. These contracts should in future also include a revision clause that producers can activate in response to unforeseeable developments. Equally important is the orientation of prices towards actual costs, including an income for the producer. It is also interesting to note that there are now plans for the farmers' side to draw up the contract offer instead of the first purchaser.

Yet, despite these positive aspects, it is clear: this parliamentary position will not adequately change producers' situation. To this end, it should have been much more ambitious. Exemptions from mandatory contracts for cooperatives still subsist; cost coverage through prices, despite some mentions, is not adequately secured. The continued exemption of cooperatives from the contractual obligation severely weakens producers' position - a clear conflict of interest to the detriment of farmers. Precisely the exemptions from contractual obligation represent a major weakening of the market framework - this includes the considered possibility for a Member State to exempt entire sectors from the contractual obligation at the request of interbranch organisations or large agricultural organisations (This would not affect the dairy sector). Furthermore, the absence of a crisis instrument such as the [Market Responsibility Programme](#) within the scope of the Milk Market Observatory means that Europe remains largely unable to act in the face of market imbalances.

Through this position, the Agriculture Committee confirms that the neoliberal - and thus anti-farmer - line of the past will not return. However, a real breakthrough looks different: the existing structural imbalance remains, and the income situation of farms will not be fundamentally improved by this report.

That any progress has been made at all and that there is at least some willingness to shape the market in politics can primarily be attributed to the engagement of progressive organisations such as the European Milk Board asbl and the protests of the past year. Without this external pressure, there would have been hardly any improvement. The upcoming trilogue negotiations between Parliament, Council and Commission will be crucial: the achievements must not be watered down in this regard.

However, one thing is clear: without a much deeper reform, it will not be possible to give farmers in Europe real prospects. Only clear and binding rules that ensure fair prices and cost coverage can prevent more farms from giving up due to the lack of prospects or young people from not even entering the agricultural sector.

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