

News Details

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Brussels: Press release 1.09.09 and demand to politics

PRESS RELEASE

Change of system for reasons of common sense - Restrict, do not increase

Today the European Milk Board (EMB) handed the European Council and the European Commission in Brussels its demands for overcoming the milk market crisis. This evening talks are being held with representatives of the European Parliament.

Brussels, 01.09.2009: The situation in the milk market has gone beyond being serious. An increase in milk production is at odds with a downturn in sales. The oversupply of milk has resulted in an unprecedented slump in milk prices. The European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament are aware of this fact. The measures so far taken by the European politicians to overcome the crisis have, however, done nothing to improve the situation. Today, in Brussels, the EMB reiterated its demand for a sensible strategy to those responsible in the EU institutions and handed over a catalogue of demands for eliminating surpluses. European Commissioner Mariann Fischer-Boel and the European Council of Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries' President Eskil Erlandsson were invited to receive in person the European milk producers' demands for sustainable milk production.

"Since early 2009, the European Commission has been trying to stabilise the market by reintroducing export refunds and hoarding vast amounts of butter and skimmed milk powder, after having pushed for volumes to be increased. Although these measures have already cost hundreds of millions of euros, they have failed to prevent a collapse of the milk price", explained the President of the EMB, Romuald Schaber. He went on: "Our demands attack the root of the problem - excess milk production". The volume of production had to be subject to sensible restrictions, he said. Only that way could the drastic price situation be reversed effectively and at a lesser cost than hitherto.

The EMB's demands

The EMB's proposals are for medium-term measures to reduce supply and to set up a monitoring agency to ascertain the supply and demand situation, a producer-financed levy and the possibility of bringing milk producers together in producer associations. Moreover, in the short term, a step-by-step plan to swiftly reduce the volume of milk should result in the dramatic price situation being relaxed.

"The only solution is to change the EU policy. I think we all realised long ago that the European Commission's strategy of increasing the volume of milk and allowing excess production to flood the world market simply doesn't work", said EMB Vice-President Sieta van Keimpema. "The way forward for the milk market has to be limiting supply in line with demand and not increasing production regardless of the market: then high-quality, sustainable milk production will still have a chance", is how van Keimpema put the EMB strategy in a nutshell.

Across Europe milk producers are now being paid 18 to 24 cents a kilo of milk, which equates to roughly half of the total production costs and therefore half the requisite price. In every European country dairy farms are shutting up shop for this reason. The milk producers are stepping up their protests. All over Europe the dairy farmers are making it clear that they are ready and willing to fight for their farms.

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