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European Civil Society is Behind the Milk Producers - Economic and Social Committee for a Milk Market with Volume-Regulation

Press Release

Hamm, 19.02.10: As the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) announced yesterday, measures are urgently needed to balance out supply and demand on the milk market. The press release issued by the Committee states: "Food in general and milk in particular are too important for the well-being of citizens to be left to the vagaries of a free, unregulated market."

Hence, the EESC supports the position of those European milk producers affiliated to the European Milk Board (EMB), who repeatedly emphasise the necessity of flexible volume regulation in order to achieve fair milk prices. According to the report, "a system of marketing measures that relate to supply and demand is central to securing sustained and environmentally friendly production in the years after 2015".

The criticism of current EU policy – as expressed by the EESC – which currently advocates raising milk quotas, before abolishing them completely, is quite clear. According to the EESC's press release, to proceed in this way goes against the EU's objective of developing sustainable agriculture. It is the wrong way of reacting to increased concentration on the retail sector, which degrades milk producers to having to accept prices rather than set them.

Moreover, the EESC also sees far-reaching negative consequences for the cultural heritage and multifunctional development of rural areas resulting from deregulating the milk market

After the European Court of Auditors, the Economic and Social Committee has now clearly pointed out the urgency of ending the current course of liberalisation promoted by the EU Commission and the EU Council and replacing it with a sensible marketing policy.

The European Milk Board also regards the comprehensive correction of current EU milk policy as essential. According to Romuald Schaber, President of the European Milk Board, "this includes strengthening the producers by implementing an exemption with respect to the EU antitrust law, as well as integrating social groups in a monitoring agency as observers of the milk market. Due to the high concentration of retailers and industry and the high perishability of the product, milk requires a higher authority, that is able to instil a balance between supply and demand."

Sieta van Keimpema, Vice President of the EMB from The Netherlands, said: "EMB milk producers have shown their satisfaction with the far-sightedness displayed by the report published yesterday by the EESC. Only stable prices and a fair income for milk producers can secure the sustained, extensive production of high quality milk. It is now high time to act."

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[<<< back](#)