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European dairy farmers' organisation: after many years as President, Romuald Schaber passes the baton to Erwin Schöpges

(Brussels, 18.04.2018) From yesterday's general assembly of the European Milk Board (EMB), Erwin Schöpges emerged as the new President of the European umbrella organisation. The 53-year-old dairy farmer from Belgium has actively championed a fair milk policy ever since the EMB was founded.

In addition, the EMB Executive Committee was bolstered by two new members: Johannes Pfaller from the German milk producer organisation BDM, and Pat McCormack from the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA). With this committed team, the EMB is well equipped to continue to strongly advocate fair milk prices and stable milk production. The outgoing President, Romuald Schaber, is retiring after twelve successful years with the EMB to devote more attention in future to his work as a dairy farmer. John Comer from Ireland also left the Board after six years of office.

"Solidarity, cooperation and fairness are the core principles of the European dairy farmers' work", stressed Erwin Schöpges at the meeting of 20 organisations from all over Europe. "We will continue to be highly motivated in working for cost-covering milk production, including fair pay. A production that is sustainable for consumers, for the EU producers, and also for the producers in developing countries."

In a moving farewell on Tuesday, the dairy farmers had expressed their sincere thanks for the departing President's work. "As a strong and fair President, Romuald Schaber drove the dairy farmers of Europe well forward, creating an important basis for the further work of the milk producers", said Erwin Schöpges. Schaber himself views his time in the EMB as extraordinarily enriching in both personal and professional terms. "Working together with my European fellow dairy farmers over the last twelve years towards a better milk policy was one of the most significant and pleasurable experiences I have had. It was and always will be important to assume responsibility on the political side of our profession and join forces to defend our position."

The dairy farmers' commitment to sustainable agriculture

At the general assembly, the milk producers stressed they would continue to engage in the political debate with constructive concepts for a stable milk market and powerful campaigns of action. In this the [Market Responsibility Programme](#) (MRP) is vital for a flexible adjustment of volumes to demand in times of crisis. For fairness and sustainability had to be truly part and parcel of agriculture.

The EMB takes a very critical view of the paradox in the trading sector: on the one hand there is a legitimate societal need for fair conditions in production and trade for humans, animals and the environment. On the other hand, current trade policy is working precisely against those conditions. With its orientation to extremely low prices and excessive competitiveness, the policy is helping stakeholders to drive one another to ruin and keep fairness out of the frame. It is important that policy-makers take this paradox on board and pave the way for a truly fair policy.

European dairy farmers are doing their best to move forward in this. With concepts like the Market Responsibility Programme they are assuming responsibility in the milk market. As in the last years, the driving force for their successful involvement in the dairy sector will continue to be solidarity among European milk producers and closing ranks with EU citizens.

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