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European Milk Board (EMB) presents food-for-thought paper on CAP reform

Paper contains important proposals for Ministers of Agriculture meeting in Tallinn

(Brussels, 31/08/2017) When the EU Ministers of Agriculture travel to their meeting in Tallinn in the next few days, one politician or the other will certainly have the EMB's food-for-thought paper on the CAP reform in his luggage. The paper, which the EMB sent to the ministers for their information in recent weeks, sets out six important aims for a progressive agricultural policy. What combines them all is the focus on a new CAP, which assumes responsibility not only for the market but also for society and cohesion in the EU. Romuald Schaber, the President of the EMB, summarises the key points: "Past experience has taught us that it is important to champion a holistic and integrative policy. The new CAP should help overcome social inequalities, enable every country and region to continue producing milk, and also act responsibly towards developing nations." Besides a detailed analysis of the market and policy in recent years, the food-for-thought paper shows in concrete terms how fair and sustainable agriculture can be achieved for the dairy sector. "At their meeting, the Ministers of Agriculture will be talking primarily about instruments intended to eliminate the risks in the agricultural sector. With its <link special-content market-responsibility-programme.html>Market Responsibility Programme (MRP), the food-for-thought paper presents an instrument that can be used specifically to prevent crises. It operates *inter alia* with the voluntary restraint on supply, which has proven effective in recent months", says Schaber.

Not all instruments are alike, as evidenced by the problems of the large quantities of skimmed milk powder currently subject to intervention. Withdrawn from the market in 2016 to ease it, these quantities now hover like the sword of Damocles over the producers, threatening the recovery in the price of milk. Marketing them now whilst milk powder prices are already plummeting again is tantamount to pumping water into an already flooded area. There has to be a rethink about such instruments, which only defer a problem and can even make it ultimately worse.

The EMB Vice-President, Sieta van Keimpema, therefore sees in the establishment of a properly functioning instrument an important signal to dairy farmers: "It's not an easy job that dairy farmers do day in, day out." It entails, she says, a great deal of work, time and also risks of accident, demands a lot of broad knowledge, patience and strong commitment. "We're waiting for progressive reform, for we would like to concentrate on our work as dairy farmers, secure in the knowledge that the right instruments have been installed and that the times of having to worry and be demoralised are finally over."

In this regard, the dairy farmers want to take responsibility themselves and with the paper on the CAP reform give a major impetus to the debate on reform.

Click here to see the food-for-thought paper

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