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European Milk Board Members' Meeting sets the course for the future of the dairy farmer movement in Europe

The half-yearly Members' Meeting of the European Milk Board (EMB) was held in Brussels on 12/13 March. Representatives of the national member organisations elected a new Board and determined the EMB strategy vis-à-vis policy-makers and civil society.

As in previous years the EMB Members' Meeting brought together old acquaintances and new colleagues from the national member organisations to discuss the current situation of dairy farmers in Europe, exchange experiences and define the guidelines for the future work of the EMB on a European level. On the first day the Dutch EMB Vice-President Sieta van Keimpema reported on the EMB's activities last year, such as the numerous talks with agricultural policy-makers in Brussels and various European capital cities, and the EMB's stands at agricultural fairs like Green Week in Berlin.

That a market needs moral rules for it to work properly was confirmed in a very interesting presentation by Professor Lütge from Munich University of Technology in keeping with the spirit of the European dairy farmers. In addition, reports on progress made in the "Fair Milk" project were presented from the member countries, all very encouraging for the future of the project. After introductory words from the Belgian Board member Erwin Schöpges and exhaustive discussion, the members agreed to proceed in a twin-track manner with the future strategy of the EMB. Firstly, the successful campaigns and talks with European politicians are to be continued; secondly, a start is to be made on uniting milk producers on a European level, the possibility of which was opened up by the EU Milk Package adopted in January.

The focus of the second day was the election of a new EMB Board for the next two years. In the election of the members of the Board for the first time the EMB member states were subdivided into Northern, Southern, Western and Central/Eastern European groups of countries to ensure a balanced regional distribution of Board members. The main feature of the discussion in the run-up to the election was commitment to and strong personal identification with the EMB's aims. In three ballots Romuald Schaber (BDM, Germany) and Sieta van Keimpema (DDB, Netherlands) were definitively re-elected President and Vice-President respectively. Roberto Cavaliere (APL, Italy) and Erwin Schöpges (MIG, Belgium) were likewise returned as members of the Board. New Board members are Richard Blanc (APLI, France), Erna Feldhofer (IG-Milch, Austria) and John Comer (ICMSA, Ireland).

After two days of hard work all the participants were able to head off home with the feeling that the EMB is well geared up to the future in terms of strategy and staff. Now we can start the other tasks to achieve the aim of a fair market structure for dairy farmers in Europe, one that secures their livelihood.

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