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Joint press release: EU Agricultural policy has to create framework for balanced markets

Immediate measure: reduce milk quota and put effective supply control into action

Strasbourg, 14.7.2009: Several thousand farmers came to Strasbourg today to draw attention, on the day the President of the new EU Parliament is being elected, to the need for a responsible agricultural policy. Faced with the catastrophic milk market situation, milk producers in particular had undertaken long journeys to be here. The prices paid to producers - between 20 and 22 cents a litre - are way below production costs and now threatening the livelihood of many a farm. The deregulation of the milk market introduced by the CAP has already failed.

The European Milk Board (EMB) and European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) producers are united in their demand for measures that restore equilibrium to the milk market, thus enabling a rise in prices paid to milk producers. Romuald Schaber, President of the EMB: "As an immediate measure we demand that at least 5% of the milk quota be frozen." The decrease in the volume of milk would mean supply were adjusted to demand again and fair producer prices gradually became reality. "But we have to go a step further to ensure that supply can also be adjusted to demand in the future", Schaber added. This change to the system is indispensable.

"The existing European control of volumes has to be supplemented with a mechanism that enables supply to be adjusted every year. It should be possible to lower or raise the volume of milk according to market demand. The yardstick has to be the achievement of a cost-covering price paid to producers." That is the sine qua non for an adequate income for milk producers and therefore for sustainable pan-European milk production as well.

It is obvious to the farmers belonging to the two European umbrella organisations that European products can only be sold to non-EU countries at fair terms. Rene Louail, board member of the ECVC: "The EU export subsidies on the other hand destroy both trade and the milk markets, especially in the southern hemisphere. Plus the fact they alter nothing when it comes to the fundamental problem of a fixed volume of milk divorced from the real market situation."

The EU agricultural policy ought to focus on milk production that spares resources and is autonomous. René Louail: "The principle of food sovereignty has to carry on being the core issue for coping with the challenges of the current crisis." Pan-European agriculture secured via cost-covering producer prices is the basis of reliable supply of fresh, high-quality food to the people of Europe.

And the EU Ministers of Agriculture, who had met in Brussels the day before, were called upon by the speakers at the demonstration to assume their responsibility for appropriate basic conditions for the agricultural markets. The speakers said the milk producers were at the end of their tether.

After the demonstration a delegation from both organisations met EU politicians for talks at the European Parliament.

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Statement of Support

The Members of Fairness for Farmers in Europe (FFE) wish to add full support to the protest in Strasburg and to the aims of ECVC and EMB to date on behalf of European Dairy Farmers.

William Taylor
FFE Co-ordinator

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