

25.05.2009

More than 2000 dairy farmers haul European Ministers of Agriculture in Brussels into the reality of agriculture

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Brussels, 25.05.09: In a cowshed and yet in the heart of Brussels. Today more than 2000 farmers along with their cows from all over Europe gathered outside the EU Council building to call on the Ministers of Agriculture that were meeting there to put an end to the slaughter of farms in Europe by passing sensible resolutions. On their march from Gare du Nord (Northern train station) to the Council building the farmers showed with many transparencies and their voices, how important those resolutions are. During that event a delegation of the European Milk Board (EMB) met with president of the Agricultural Council Jakub Sebesta.

Not every Minister of Agriculture was opposed to price-stabilising measures. In a letter written in early May, the Belgian minister Benoît Lutgen had called on fellow European ministers to take an active stand in this direction. The EU Council of Agriculture and Fisheries has now been asked to make the right decisions and introduce flexible volume control.

The EU-commissioner Mariann Fisher Boel talked to the participating dairy farmers and presented her opinion again, that the low milk prices be the result of the worldwide economic crisis and not the result of the decreased quota. The dairy farmers of the EMB did absolutely not agree with that position.

Reducing/ flexibilizing milk quotas

Now appropriate decisions made by the EU Council of Agriculture and Fisheries are necessary to establish the flexible volume regulation, suggested by the EMB. As an effective and essential short term measure the EMB demands the reduction of the milk quota by 5 percent for the business year 2009/ 2010.

So far the resolutions of the Commission and of the Council of Agriculture and Fisheries pushing ahead with the increase in the volume of milk have ensured that the trading groups have managed to keep on lowering milk prices across Europe. "In this way the EU-Council has given them even more power and once more shifted the balance to the detriment of the farmers, says Romuald Schaber - president of the EMB. "The European dairy farmers are squeezed out completely", adds Ernst Halbmayr, member of the Executive Committee of the EMB. He knows: "Flexible supply control that allows the volume of milk to be limited to a reasonable degree is the only chance the farmers have of being able to gain cost covering milk prices in the market." National Ministers of Agriculture and the EU policy also state that prices are too low and have to go up. They agree that the price situation in the milk market is untenable for farmers. Yet so far they have done nothing to correct their misguided measures. Anyone still adhering to the resolutions passed on increasing volumes is all for concentrating and industrialising milk production. It is not about individual farmers that cannot cope with the market and so have to give up: it is about the entire profession – the very livelihood of farmers. Throughout Europe.

Especially in times of crisis the political responsible ones should do everything possible to give a perspective to the dairy farmers and to protect the food sovereignty of Europe.

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