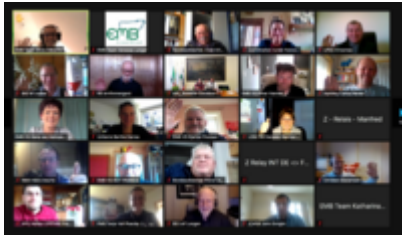


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No future for European milk production without young farmers!



EMB General Assembly with producers from 13 European countries reaffirmed its commitment to fighting for future-proof, cost-covering agriculture

(Brussels, 29 April 2021) At their biannual General Assembly, which was an entirely digital event this spring, the long-term survival of European milk production was the main topic for the producers coming together as members of the European Milk Board (EMB). The fact that only 5% of producers in the EU are below the age of 35 and only 14% are between 35 and 44 years old projects a grim future for the European agricultural sector. This trend is further exacerbated by milk producer prices in many countries being well below production costs – in some countries, cost coverage is a mere 50%. The dairy farmers at the Assembly were presented with figures from a cost study, which will soon be published and which paints a very representative picture of the current situation, in addition to providing EU average costs. The study also unequivocally proves that in the eight key milk producing countries it covers, the current income reality does not allow for any future prospects. This tense situation will only get worse: While the milk price has, for all intents and purposes, stagnated, costs for feed and climate change mitigation are increasing by leaps and bounds.

In spite of this situation, however, it is still absolutely possible to generate revenue from milk, as a [study presented by the MEG Milch Board on value creation in German dairies](#) clearly shows. Sadly, these profits remain at processor level. Producers continue to struggle with cost shortfalls, even when the rest of the production chain is making a sizeable profit. Even though dairies are able to generate considerable value creation – with private dairies often achieving much higher levels than cooperative dairies – producers are only ever paid inadequate milk prices across the board. EMB producers collectively agree that if farms are to survive, a higher percentage of the revenue generated from milk must reach them.

Decent, cost-covering prices are possible! This is demonstrated not only by the figures on value creation by dairies, but also by producer-led projects like [Fair Milk](#). Representatives from this project operating in numerous EMB countries shared their success stories at the General Assembly, which centre around fair prices for farmers as well as the further development of good, direct relations with consumers. On this topic, EMB Vice-President Kjartan Poulsen said, “We are proud of the excellent work done by the Fair Milk representatives in their different countries.”

Another cross-generational challenge already being faced by farmers directly on their farms is the environmental and climate crisis, in the form of issues like (green) fodder shortages due to droughts. However, it is important to ensure that the costs of mitigation actions to deal with these crises are not simply passed on to producers. That being said, there is still a lack of balanced, inclusive approaches on the political level to look at how the costs of such measures would be covered. As EMB President Sieta van Keimpema puts it: “The European Green Deal and its Farm to Fork Strategy outlines comprehensive measures but it does not talk about how they will be funded. Unfortunately, the situation of farmers is not taken into account in any way.” In fact, many young farmers especially feel that producers are, if at all, placed at the margins of this strategy or of the many national measures.

Irrespective of age group, it was clear to all EMB members at the General Assembly that they need to and want to advocate even more vociferously for a holistically future-proof and generationally-fair agricultural sector. They all agreed that young farmers are the future and that the EMB will work more closely with them to ensure cost-covering agricultural prices.

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