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Non! to CETA & Oui! to a sustainable and fair trade policy

Farmers call on Members of Parliament to refuse ratifying CETA

(Paris, 17 July 2019) Farmers are currently in the French capital and are calling for a loud and clear “Non!" in the national vote on CETA. Representatives from the dairy farmers' association OPL of the farmers' organisation Coordination Rurale (CR) are in front of the Assemblée Nationale – the French Parliament – and are asking their elected representatives to speak out against the contentious trade agreement between the EU and Canada. It is an opportunity for every Member of Parliament to show real support for fair trade that is not harmful.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which does away with all industrial tariffs and more than 90 percent of agricultural tariffs, is detrimental to both European and Canadian farmers. It undermines the legitimate concerns that have been expressed by farmers, farm workers and consumers for years now.

As the French consumer representatives in Paris explain, CETA is contrary to important goals such as higher value creation, fair producer prices, and a healthy, safe and sustainable food supply. Nonetheless, these very goals are a cornerstone of France’s new agricultural law "EGalim", adopted in 2018. According to CR General Secretary Véronique Le Floc’h, it is, therefore, essential for the French Parliament to show due recognition for sustainable agriculture in today's vote: "The European Commission is weakening our agricultural model by concluding such trade agreements. Family-run farms, which are in line with consumer expectations, are a key element of this system. Our elected representatives must therefore set a precedent with the CETA vote and show that France is not willing to switch over to an ultra-liberal agricultural model."

High meat quotas are a concern for EU agricultural sector

Together with France, the other EU Member States are naturally affected by this Agreement as well. The high beef and pig meat quotas, which have been conceded in the Agreement as part of Canada's imports, are problematic for European farmers, explains Erwin Schöpges, President of the European Milk Board (EMB). They are bad for the meat sector as well as dairy farmers, who will have to deal with lower revenues from cow slaughters and calf sales.

Canada's market opening for cheese products from the EU has been captured in an additional tariff quota of 18,500 tonnes. According to Erwin Schöpges, the big dairies and manufacturers of speciality cheeses will be the ones reaping major profits. "EU dairy farmers, on the other hand, can expect no real gains from this Agreement. Without an effective crisis instrument, they will continue to struggle with milk prices well below production costs."

Call on other EU Member States to refuse ratification as well

As the European association of dairy farmers, the EMB, therefore, supports the demands of our French colleagues. Furthermore, we also address them to all other EU Member States with an upcoming national vote on CETA. Present at the rally today, EMB Vice-president Sieta van Keimpema, has a clear message for national Members of Parliament: "Talk to your farmers, talk to your citizens and as their elected representatives, live up to their expectations. They turned a deaf ear to our significant concerns at EU level and CETA was adopted in spite of all the criticism. You can, however, act at national level to prevent our farmers and thus our agricultural sector from being further affected by these harmful conditions. Please follow through and do not ratify the Agreement in your country!"

Contacts:
EMB vice-president Sieta van Keimpema (EN, NL, DE) : +31 (0)612 168 000
EMB press office Vanessa Langer (EN, DE, FR): +32 (0)2 808 1935
CR General Secretary Véronique Le Floc'h (FR) : +33 (0)6 03 75 66 45

CR President Bernard Lannes (FR) : +33 (0)5 62 60 14 96

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