

14.02.2024

Open letter from the European Milk Board asbl to the European Commission

Brussels, 13 February 2024

President of the European Commission,
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development,

We are addressing this open letter to you because, on one hand, the situation for European farmers and food production and, on the other, for the EU as a whole has deteriorated dramatically. Not a day goes by without numerous, large-scale protests and actions by farmers all across Europe. The support among citizens for the important concerns voiced by us farmers is growing, while at the same time the faith in political and public institutions is waning.

We call on you and also offer our cooperation to bring about effective, long-term reforms in the agricultural system.

It is very important to envisage a future framework that leads to fundamental changes and reforms.

- The era of dependence on public funds,
- the era of unprofitable, loss-making food production at producer level,
- the era of farmers leaving the sector in droves and young people seeing no possibilities to enter this profession

→ This era has reached the end of the line.

Let us use this moment, this opportunity to reform the EU agricultural system – the agricultural market – in a direction that makes it future-proof. PRODUCERS BEING ABLE TO EARN A LIVING FROM THE MARKET must be the aim of these reforms.

Temporarily calming protests with subsidies and filling only the most-urgent gaps and shortfalls is not a long-term option. Public funds or tax rebates are not the answer because resources are limited. They can be used within the framework of the Green Deal as an incentive and to fund the envisaged measures – but only in tandem with reforms that reshape the market and ensure that farmers can draw an adequate income from the market.

This is why, as representatives of producers, we align ourselves with those who are pushing for a future with prospects and not with all those who wish to maintain a system that is clearly broken. After all, this is what led to the problems and protests in the first place and it will continue to exploit farmers.

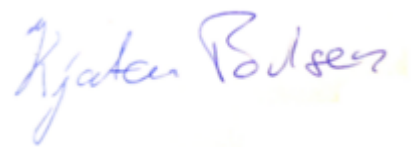
Let us use this opportunity to discuss real solutions and to implement them. Yes, these solutions target the market and market stakeholders. They target the distribution of margins along the value chain. A chain where money is definitely being made with foodstuffs, but none of it reaches farmers and their families. The agricultural sector must move away from dependence on taxpayer money towards a balanced sector where margins are fairly distributed between different market stakeholders. As long as this aspect is not addressed, we will simply continue down the same path, which has pushed us farmers into an ignoble situation and has led to protests in individual countries that have shaken the EU as a whole.

European elections are around the corner and the massive dissatisfaction among farmers does not only influence how they vote; it also has an impact on other sections of society. Conviction and support can only come for an EU that ensures a future for farming. If we are able to work together to develop future prospects where producer income on the market is ensured in the long-term, it will lead to trust and thus support for the EU and its institutions. For this to happen, food production must evolve from an unprofitable sector that is, furthermore, addicted to subsidies, to a profitable one.

We can work together on a market and a sector that convinces young people to take up this profession and gives farmers the prospects they need to produce food for all of us here in Europe. If this is not tackled, then farmers – an essential pillar of our society – will be further sidelined from the EU value system, leading to all the negative consequences for them and their families as well as for food production and the EU as a whole that are part and parcel.

We would therefore like to invite you to an urgent meeting to jointly discuss the possibilities for and design of essential reforms in the agricultural sector. We look forward to receiving information about your availabilities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kjartan Poulsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kjartan" and the last name "Poulsen" clearly distinguishable.

Kjartan Poulsen, EMB President

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