

25.07.2014

Press release: Belgian milk producers unite in the WALLonia FArmers Board (WAFAB)

(Brussels, 25.07.2014) At a press conference in Libramont, Belgium, today Belgian farmers announced the formation of the WALLonia FArmers Board (WAFAB). The aim of this move is to improve the Wallonian producers' market position which, as throughout Europe, is chronically weak. "The producers are unable to defend their interests properly because they are too isolated and lack the cohesion required to have a counter-power worthy of that name", explains the President of the new organisation, Guy Francq. He adds: "So it is of primary importance that the Wallonian producers unite in a single structure set up to defend their interests."

The tasks of the WAFAB

The non-profit-making association's stated role is to ensure sustainable agricultural production in Wallonia, operate as a monitoring board of the agricultural market, keeping an eye on the development of supply and on farm-gate prices, and represent the producers' interests in dealings with the buyers of their products.

The organisation also aims to optimise production costs by operating as a purchasing association for the means of agricultural production. It is further to commission studies on, for instance, innovative production methods and on the market development.

EMB welcomes formation of the WAFAB

In the formation of the WAFAB the European Milk Board (EMB) sees an important means of strengthening the farmers. The President of the EMB, Romuald Schaber, congratulates his colleagues in Belgium on this step: "The Wallonian producers are uniting to obtain more power in the market collectively. This is very positive for two reasons. Firstly, they are showing vital initiative and actively shaping their market opportunities. Secondly, as a group they would actually have better chances than before when dealing with other market players." It was now up to the producers to take this opportunity and join the WAFAB. "The bigger the number of farmers joining in, the stronger the WAFAB can be in representing them", says Schaber.

In other countries, too, like France and Germany with the France Milk Board and the MEG Milch Board, there are already producer organisations helping to strengthen the producers' position in the market.

Moreover, Mr Schaber is delighted that Belgium has initiated a study to work out the full costs. After Germany, France and the Netherlands, soon Belgium will also be able to come up with clear figures on its milk production costs."

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