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Press release: High Level Group of Experts on Milk fails to deliver

EU High Level Group of Experts on Milk's final report does nothing to help solve the catastrophic situation in the milk market - Milk producers condemn the proposals in the strongest terms

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The proposals published today by the EU High Level Group of Experts on Milk (HLGM) in its final report do nothing to counter the milk market crisis. The President of the European Milk Board (EMB), Romuald Schaber, comments: "The recommendations made to the European Commission by the HLGM cannot improve either the milk producers' situation or that of consumers in Europe". Neither futures markets nor a European agency monitoring the distribution of margins in the food chain can guarantee a stable market, stable and fair prices. And European guidelines for contracts between producers and dairies on a voluntary basis, likewise recommended by the HLGM, clutch the air. "There's nothing to stop contracts being concluded right now. It is just that the producers' weak position in the market prevents those contracts being fair to them. And nothing will alter that in the future either, as long as the producers' have no effective clout in the market. It is imperative that a new system be introduced that gives the milk producers the opportunity to jointly adjust production to the demand for milk", stresses Romuald Schaber. That is why the EMB is calling for the creation of a monitoring and market configuring agency on EU level.

"In the whole report there are only two points that can be regarded as positive", says the Vice-President of the EMB from the Netherlands, Sieta van Keimpema. The one is the strengthening of the legal basis for producer organisations, to give them more bargaining power with the dairies. The other is the proposal that addresses better labelling of dairy produce, in the right direction. "Everything else is way off the target of stable milk production at fair prices, and is unacceptable", Sieta van Keimpema adds.

The idea was for the HLGM to come up with solutions for the catastrophic milk market situation. It is the milk producers for whom the difficult crisis is a real body blow. Not the industry, not the retailers. But in its work the HLGM all but turned a blind eye to the milk producers' concerns. It is a sobering thought that the proposals put forward by stakeholders like the EMB were not given the slightest consideration by the High Level Group of Experts. Even recommendations from the European Court of Auditors, the German Federal Cartel Office, and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) were totally ignored.

The HLGM's final report shows the group's failure to get to grips with the problems of the milk market. The reason for the strong protests at the end of last year has not gone away. "That is why the EMB milk producers will carry on fighting for their future - will have to carry on fighting. Their livelihood is at stake", says Romuald Schaber, reinforcing the EMB's position.

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