News Details
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The great "Wellie toss" by dairy producers

The protest highlighted: the proposals of the EU HLG are threatening our livelihoods - Alternatives are required.

A storm was gathering in Brussels yesterday and this was not solely caused by the thunderstorms which darkened the skies over Berleymont, the European Commission Building in Brussels. On the 12th of July, the Agricultural Ministers of the 27 Member States met to discuss agricultural reform in the EU. Milk producers from the whole of Europe descended on Brussels for this occasion. They wanted to make sure that their voices were heard and make clear their feelings on the report of the high ranking expert group (High Level Group on Milk). They protested on a number of issues, namely, agricultural contracts, export dumping and demonstrated in favour of a fair price for their milk, for better conditions in the milk market and volume control. The European Milk Board, with the support of its member associations from around Europe, called on its members to attend the demonstration. They were professionally supported in this by the European office of Via Campesina and by representatives from various environmental, development aid and consumer organisations.

Several speakers from the ECVC and the EMB highlighted the need for improvements in the HLGM report and they called on the Commission, Parliament and Council to take account of their remedial proposals regarding income security of producers and achieve a balance of power in the milk market.

Furthermore, representatives from environmental organisations and development aid groups stressed the importance of regulation in the market, in order to impede export dumping which burdens producers in developing countries.

In order to highlight the current untenable position of the producers, a group of enslaved farmers surrounded by the representatives of the dairy industry moved through the crowd. The farmers were eventually liberated by the representatives of the EMB and ECVC. Romuald Schaber, President of the EMB explained the sequences of events and stated that “[the scene acted out] portrays the daily reality of European milk producers. A number of dairy farmers are being squeezed out of the market controlled by the dairy industry, which can then dictate an unfair price for milk products.”

The livelihoods of many milk producers are severely threatened and a further liberalisation of the market would exacerbate the situation even further. In order to vent their frustration and according to the motto “soon you can do the milking yourselves” which could be read on placards, the participants at the demonstration, enthusiastically threw hundreds of wellington boots in the direction of the Council building.

All the speakers stated the associations have much work to do, however, as nothing is decided, that now is the time to approach and work with the Ministers, representatives and members of the Belgian Council Presidency, to make clear the concerns of the milk producers and come up with appropriate solutions.

Here you will find commentary from the European Milk Board regarding the proposals of the EU High Level Group as well as proposals for a block exemption regulation for milk producers which create a workable framework for an improved position on the market for dairy producers. These were the first steps in the direction of a promising future for milk producers in Europe.

PDF Commentary (4 pages)

PDF Summary of the Block Exemption Regulation (2 pages)

<link en external-link-new-window external link in new>Click here to see the pictures of the demonstration

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVdp1_1mY1Q

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