

INTERNATIONAL  
**DAIRY**  
magazine



**Annual Convention**

Sustainable Food Systems  
and European Dairy

*uniting dairy excellence & ambition*

## EDA annual convention 2021

### Sustainable food systems and European dairy



Sustainable food systems and European dairy was the general motto of this year's agm of the European Dairy Association (EDA) held on 1 October in Brussels. The event counted 90 live participants and about 100 online attendees spread across the world. In the opening speech, EDA President Giuseppe Ambrosi highlighted the European lactosphere's ambitions in terms of sustainability. The European dairy industry did not wait for the EU Commission and the European Green Deal but has taken the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals seriously publishing carbon net zero objectives far ahead of the Green Deal.

The industry's ambition is based on excellence of products, processes and people, Ambrosi said, which is recognized at global level. Thus, the world is calling for more European dairy. But for being an accepted global player, the European Union must operate on a secure basis in terms of energy, workforce and security in food supply. Ambrosi made it clear that any regulations under the roof of Green Deal or Farm-to-Fork must be science-based and science-assessed calling for an official impact assessment by the EU Commission.

## Sustainable food systems and european dairy



Prof. Roel Jongeneel, Wageningen University, analysed probable consequences of the Green Deal and the Farm-to-Fork Strategy for the EU dairy industry and showed the way forward. The EU's key challenge is not the environment, Jongeneel said, pointing out to the Southern Hemisphere where sustainability has not come as far as in our place. But in the future, the effects of the EU's green policy will make cow herd numbers decrease. This will be especially happen in the some 15 hot spots around the EU where dairy is concentrated – with possibly serious consequences for these areas.

The impacts of the various targets issued by the Commission (a.o. 35% less GHG until 2030, 50% less pesticides ...) have been partly evaluated by JRC, Jongeneel reported. Overall, these targets may lead to a 12% drop of milk production depending on the region and an up to 36% price increase. Farm income may benefit only if markets work in favour. On the processors' side, small players active in domestic markets as well as large corporations may benefit from the changes while large co-ops that are dependent on world markets and have a narrow portfolio may be the losers, Jongeneel said.

The Dutch economist recommends that while the Green Deal is the long-term vision advancements should be made in incremental steps in a regional approach. The market, i.e. tradeable emission rights, would be the best means to reduce emissions in a cost-effective way, Jongeneel told the audience.

## The Green Deal and its consequences



Lukáš Víšek, member of cabinet of First Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans and one of the main architects of the Green Deal, said that the climate crisis we face would not allow wasting time for improving sustainability. The EU has taken it all into law so there won't be a chance for later politics and upcoming crises to change the fundamental goal of climate neutrality. The Green Deal, he added, was made to speed up all processes for climate protection that have already been started, some of them years ago as with the EU dairy industry.

The Green Deal and the Farm-to-Fork-Strategy look at the whole food supply chain incl. consumers' diet and food waste at this stage. The dairy industry, Víšek stated, is in a powerful position in midst these changes, as it can reach out to farmers as well as to consumers. The sector can demand milk produced in a sustainable way and stimulate demand for more sustainable products from consumer

side. The Commission will develop Eco Schemes to help farmers adopt the right practices, Víšek promised.

In the end, Víšek hopes, that EU food will be high in demand worldwide for its sustainability, helping manufacturers to compete in the world market, and that EU-made food will become a global sustainability standard. He invited all involved stages of the dairy chain to feed the Commission with relevant insights (incl. labelling) for assessment of the consequences of the Green Deal that will be made science-based and science-evaluated.

### FrieslandCampina's route to sustainability



Hester Maji, Corporate Director Public & Regulatory Affairs FrieslandCampina, explained how F/C is pursuing sustainability. The co-op active in 38 countries around the globe has explicit targets that were defined according to the UN climate plan. For instance, F/C is the first dairy in the world offering farmers a biodiversity monitor that allows them to assess any progress they made in this respect.

As dairy farms are highly individual, there can't be a sustainability policy that fits all. Therefore, Maji said, legislation must be customised. And the EU must look at the overall picture including side effects. Maji cited the target of 50% reduction of pesticide use that could well lead to higher mycotoxin levels in food. Addressing the EU target of 25% organic land by 2030, Maji took the Netherlands as example: the total milk market there has a volume of €10 billion. If 25% of volume sales should be made by organic dairy, consumers would have to pay an annual €250 million more for dairy products. She, Maji said, can't see a solution to this dilemma. Maji added that Brussels needs to look outside the EU – the dairy industry has competitors and needs a level playing field. Pointing out to carbon labelling, the F/C exec sees a difference: „A glass of milk cannot be compared to a chair“. With this Maji meant that milk brings a whole lot of valuable nutrients which must be appreciated as well. Maji favours to bring together eco and nutrient scores in one food label.

**Editor's note:** During the presentation of Lukáš Víšek it became quite obvious that the Commission official has never worked a day in economy. He seemingly does not understand how dependent any industry is on making profit. He said marketing should not only incorporate profit but also people and planet. And he added that the results of trade agreements are increasingly no more seen as what they offer in monetary terms but rather what the gain is for social and environmental aspects.

Common to bureaucrats, Víšek simply has little intention to look over the border. The EU dairy industry does act in a highly competitive environment and domestic markets are all but closed to foreign supply. Confronted during the discussion at the EDA event with the question how the Commission assesses the (potentially quite) negative outcome of the NZ FTA, he failed to produce a rational answer.