

May News release

The end of 'divide and conquer' is in sight

At a recent meeting, the recently formed European Milk Board (EMB) met with supporters of Dairy Farmers of Scotland (DFoS); senior representatives from the Farmers Union of Wales (FUW) and the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA).

It was noted that one of the main factors contributing to low farmgate returns is the supposed certainty that farmers will never stick together and the 'divide and conquer' tactics used by milk buyers to date have made sure that farmgate prices remain low despite market conditions that should ensure the best return for producers in many years.

Following an enlightening presentation by EMB's president, Romuald Schaber, Jackie Cahill from the ICMSA said, "They have the right idea and the skills to back it up. The EMB show a unity of purpose within Europe to increase the farmgate price...the bottom line is what we can achieve when we pull together."

One of the EMB's main aims is to take real negotiation back into the hands of producers and to change a system in which farmgate milk price is set by processors and retailers instead of the individual producers. That sentiment was echoed by DFoS with Iain Smith and Doris Robertson commenting that's exactly what DFoS and others are striving to achieve in the UK, and that a UK wide organisation that could provide a united voice for dairy farmers was needed and it could disprove the myth that farmers couldn't stick together.

Attending his 3rd EMB meeting, Chairman of the FUW's Milk and Dairy Produce Committee, Eifion Huws, said that he was impressed by the rapid transformation that had taken place in such a short time, "It was the right way forward...it makes sense for all dairy farmers to sing from the same hymn sheet".

Discussions with UK organisations about the formation of a UK Milk Producers' Alliance are underway which will provide farmers with a united voice and is aimed at all milk producers regardless of milk buyer.

Plans to send out a postcard to gauge support for the idea are in the final stages.

Ends

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Editor Background Info

Officially founded in June 2006, the **European Milk Board** is an umbrella organisation of dairy farmer associations and farmers' lobbies with national associations from nine countries including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg, Sweden and Switzerland currently members. Numerous cooperation arrangements are also in place with other countries in Europe. It was set up with the aim of combining forces to secure payment of farm-gate milk prices that cover costs.

www.europeanmilkboard.org

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The **Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association** represents the views of farmers at Local, National and European Union levels.

Particular importance is placed on defending the rights and incomes of farm families. They strive to encourage the establishment of the maximum number of family farm holdings in the country.

www.icmsa.ie

The **Farmers' Union of Wales** has one basic aim - to protect and advance the interests of those who derive an income from Welsh agriculture.

The FUW is an independent Union which values the freedom to run its own affairs. It can advance the views of farmers in Wales without fear or favour, unfettered by sectional interests.

Established in 1955, the FUW has been given the official right by the Government to represent and speak on behalf of Welsh farmers. The Union has done so at the highest level - at the National Assembly, Whitehall and Brussels.

www.fuw.org.uk

Dairy Farmers of Scotland was set up in September 2006 in order to provide a united voice for milk producers regardless of milk buyer.

The group's main aim is to support all milk producers supplying all purchasers (direct and co-op) in achieving an ex-farm price paid for their milk that *at least* covers the cost of production.

600 Scottish dairy farmers have already replied to a survey saying that they would support such a group.

www.dfos.co.uk