



Dairy Focus 02/2021

Slovenian EU Presidency





'Together. Resilient. Europe.'

This is Slovenia's elected slogan to represent its upcoming EU Presidency. Now that we are witnessing the first sings of the way out of the pandemic, but also when great efforts are required to ensure a successful recovery, Slovenia takes the challenge of driving the EU's agenda throughout the second half of 2021.

From the EU dairy sector, not only do we embrace the selected 'leitmotiv', but we are fully aligned with it, since it conveys what the EU dairy industry has accomplished and will keep on achieving during these difficult times: to deliver with resilience for a united Europe.

'Together'

The first word of the slogan, 'together', symbolizes the principle of solidarity within the European Union, and reflects the essence of the EU dairy industry: we are cooperating at all levels beyond national borders on a daily basis. EDA's new motto line, 'Uniting dairy excellence and ambition', represents the shared common purpose of the European lactosphere: supplying nutritious and healthy milk and dairy products of excellence in quality, in safety and in taste.

Together we show unity when our Single Market, one of the founding principles of our Union, is under threat. During the pandemic, we have seen a tendency to ramp up border lines in many parts of Europe. When economic fractures jeopardize our European project, the EU milk and dairy sector shows that only together and in a functioning Single Market we can overcome the challenges.

'Resilient'

As much as we show unity, our dairy supply chains have proved resilient, from the milk collection to the supermarkets, even in a crisis of the magnitude of the coronavirus pandemic. When the pandemic started to hit hard and large parts of the economy had come to a sudden still, we kept operations running and made every single effort to maintain Europe's fridges and shelves stocked with nutritious, healthy and affordable dairy products.

'Europe'

For us, the European Union is far more than a Single Market: milk and dairy are with no doubt the most prominent examples of Europe's culinary treasures and an important part of our European cultural heritage. Our sector builds bridges among regions and serves as the thriving force for rural environments, combining the most sophisticated traditions with state-of-the-art and sustainable production techniques. It is also a symbol of Europe's identity, bringing pride not only to the people working in the lactosphere – it is part of our way of life.

Four Slovenian cheeses have joined so far the elysium of our iconic European cheese excellence and are registered as protected designation of origin (PDO), safeguarding regional traditions and local cow breeds, as well as highlighting that cheese excellence is in our EU dairy genes all across the Union.

The EU dairy sector is resilient, united, and committed to work on behalf of all Europeans. During this upcoming Slovenian EU Presidency, we will keep on helping pave the way towards a successful recovery and a prosperous future for Europe.

Uniting Dairy Excellence and Ambition!

Giuseppe Ambrosi
EDA President



A message from Tomaž Žnidarič, President of the Slovenian Dairy Association

No matter how much I would like to avoid talking about the pandemic, it has affected our lives to such an extent that I have to underline its implications.

Slovenia is, even in European terms, a tiny country of 2 million inhabitants. Our GDP per capita accounts to 23,000 EUR. In dairy terms, it means around 600 thousand tons of raw milk produced on agricultural holdings, of which 91% is further processed in dairies. The sense of insecurity along with panic shopping in spring 2020 was overwhelming – to such extent, that we even had journalists coming to ask dairies whether they will be able to provide dairy products or whether people will be literally short of food. The crisis on one hand caused panic shopping and on the other a threatening raw milk surplus.



Why did I bring this up? Because that was also the time the dairy sector has proven that long-term relationship, trust and reputation are key to overcoming a crisis. I dare say that dairies were a major player in figuring out different solutions on how to overcome this crisis. In Slovenia, the dairy agri supply chain made sure that not one single litre of milk went down the drain during the crisis. Moreover, the agricultural cooperatives, dairies and retailers organized a common ad-hoc promotion campaign in order to push sales and prevent possibly devastating consequences for the farmers. The campaign carried a rather significant title: Dairy brings us together.

However, the harsh times of epidemic are (hopefully) behind us. What can we expect from the future? Better: what should we do about the future of Slovenian as well as the European dairy sector? The new common agricultural policy proposed by the European Commission aims to foster a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector that can contribute significantly to the European Green Deal. Slovenia has all the attributes to follow the proposed guidelines. The agricultural holdings are sustainably sized which is a competitive advantage. The resources and landscape are suitable for ecological farming, which is one of EU's priorities. Nevertheless, Slovenian farmers at this point merely produce a little more than 1% of ecological milk.

The new stream of funding from the CAP's direct payments budget for eco-schemes will support and incentivise farmers to undertake agricultural practices beneficial for the climate, biodiversity, and the environment, states the European Commission. This should be one of the crucial points to be taken into consideration, in both Slovenia and the EU. What we need is a smart approach: governments should empower young farmers by enabling them to join profitable agri supply chains with players such as dairy industry and retailers instead of focusing on individual farms and further fragmenting the eco-business. Slovenia is a small country and can easily achieve a nationwide sustainability transformation on a large scale: but only by working together with dairies and the rest of the agri supply chain. The same goes for Europe: it is the green heart of the world in terms of agriculture.

To conclude, I have to look back at the pandemic. During the Covid crisis Slovenian consumers shifted towards traditional, renowned brands. In times of insecurity, they looked for transparency and above all, quality. It is a lesson we all have to learn from and build upon. The Commission states that farmers are at the heart of Europe's rural communities, providing vital public goods. The future CAP therefore proposes to develop, support and invest in our rural communities. Dairies should by all means be a strong partner in this development in order to provide consumers with healthy, safe and delicious high-quality dairy products.

Slovenia's dairy status in a nutshell

Data sources: EDA surveys and IFCN Dairy Report 2019

100,800 dairy cows
12 cows per farm



2.07 million
inhabitants



4,800

dairy farms



≈ 6.11 tonnes

milk yield per cow per year



≈ 620K tonnes

cows' milk production

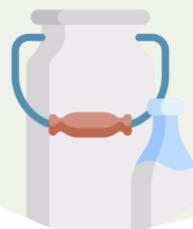


4 cheeses
PDOs



114%

Self-sufficiency in milk





Annual Convention 2021

“Sustainable Food Systems
and European Dairy:
Uniting Dairy Excellence and Ambition”

Friday, 01 October 2021

📍 Hotel Leopold, Rue du Luxembourg 35, 1050 Brussels
10:30 - 13:00

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