

EDA Annual Convention 2025

Our **EDA Annual Convention 2025** welcomed more than 200 dairy representatives from across the world to **Utrecht**, in **the Netherlands** from Wednesday 12 to Friday 14 November. Hosted by our Dutch member **NZO** (Nederlandse Zuivel Organisatie), the conference's guiding line "**Competitive, resilient and sustainable dairy**" was approached from three different angles: the future of our industry, the role of research and knowledge centres and the power of partnership with innovation suppliers.

EDA President **Albert de Groot** set the scene of the Convention in his opening speech: **Dairy is back at the centre of nutritional and societal debates.**

"European dairy remains essential in feeding billions with high-quality, nutritious and sustainable food. Our sector shows remarkable resilience and global leadership even in volatile times, driven by the people who innovate and keep the value chain strong. We must continue seizing opportunities, reinforcing our supply chain and investing in progress."



After President **Albert de Groot's** speech NZO President **Mireille Einwachter** took the floor and highlighted the need for cooperation: "Our sector is built on collaboration, innovation and generations of craftsmanship. Dairy supports tens of thousands of jobs and is central to our economy and communities."



We are the global dairy super power—also with 'super powder'— we are leaders in innovation and sustainability.

EDA President Albert de Groot opening the EDA Annual Convention 2025



NZO President Mireille Einwachter with Alisa Tiganj, Member of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Thanks to our sponsors:



Keynote speakers from the Dutch Government and the European Commission

First keynote speaker was Minister **Femke Wiersma**, who highlighted dairy as a cornerstone of European heritage and culture, underscoring its deep connection to rural communities where it provides livelihoods, food security, and economic resilience.



Femke Wiersma, Dutch Minister for Agriculture Fisheries, Food Safety and Nature with President Albert de Groot

Alisa Tiganj, Member of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen, outlined the strategic shift within the current European Commission, noting that the new approach seeks a more balanced alignment between sustainability and the competitiveness of Europe's agricultural sector.

She said that 2025 has been a year focused on rebuilding trust with farmers and reaffirming that dairy is part of the solution to Europe's challenges. The sector is strategic for our economic security, resilience and competitiveness

"European quality and origin must stay visible worldwide."



Alisa Tiganj, Member of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Ukrainian and EU dairy

Ukrainian MP **Oleksandr Haidu**, Chairman of the Committee on Agrarian and Land Policy, underlined the commitment of Ukrainian dairies to integrate into the European *lactosphere*. Despite the war, Ukraine's European integration continues and overall the Ukraine dairy sector is one of the most active sectors in terms of European integration.



Ukrainian MP Oleksandr Haidu, Chairman of the Committee on Agrarian and Land Policy

"Competitive, resilient and sustainable dairy – the future of our industry"



Hubertus Gay (OECD), Katja Seidenschur (Nestlé), Mary Ledman, Jan Derck van Karnebeek (RFC)

The first session focused on how to achieve a resilient dairy sector and led to an exchange of ideas on how to accelerate sustainability together—not through regulation, but through innovation, business development, knowledge sharing, and partnerships.

Prof. Dr. **Rob de Wijk** (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies) set the scene of the session with an introduction: *"Sustainability is an ongoing process, but to be successful we need sufficient amount of farms, milk and dairy producers: quantity matters"*.

In the panel discussion, **Mary Ledman**, Global Dairy Strategist, emphasized that dairy remains resilient and that dairy trade has been far more resilient in times of uncertainty. **Jan Derck van Karnebeek** (CEO, FrieslandCampina) stressed that it is our responsibility to "do dairy right". Sustainability, food security, and competitiveness need to be balanced, they are not mutually exclusive.

Katja Seidenschur (Global Head of Sustainability for Nutrition, Nestlé) highlighted that sustainability is not a compromise—it strengthens farmers' resilience. She explained that the goal is not to impose too many rules, but to direct incentives through an outcome-based system. **Hubertus Gay** (Head of the Agro-Food and Marketing Division, OECD) pointed out that nutritional value is an integral part of sustainability and should not be overlooked. He added that being positive and engaging others in finding solutions is the way for the sector to move forward.



President **Albert de Groot** and President **Mireille Einwachter** with 'Frau Antje' at the welcome reception



Thom Huppertz (University College Cork), **Lea Brader** (Arla Foods), **Ernst van den Ende** (Wageningen University)

"Nurturing Innovation – enhancing value through sustainability"

The second session focused on the theme **"Nurturing innovation – enhancing value through sustainability"** and offered thought-provoking perspectives from key dairy knowledge institutes.

Thom Huppertz (Professor of Dairy Research & Innovation, University College Cork), demonstrated the need to invest in knowledge and scientists to secure the future of innovation. As he noted, "Complexity is not scary; confusion is." **Ernst Van Den Ende** (Director of Animal Sciences, Wageningen University), showed with the example of Wageningen University, the importance of exchanges between academic disciplines to ensure that knowledge is not built in silos. **Lea Brader** (Senior Nutrition Scientist, Arla Foods) underlined the importance of science to make adequate nutritional recommendations to consumers but also to provide an accurate basis for decision-makers to build policy on.



Jan Vreugdenhil, **Jakob Vreugdenhil**, President **Albert de Groot**



De Graafstroom dairy sponsored our Convention with their delicious cheese

Dairy Farmers' perspective

A documentary with the testimonies of three European farmers: **Jean-Luc Maeyaert** (France), **Susan Dijkshoorn** (the Netherlands) and **Eric Wilke** (Germany) explained their vision of what sustainability means to them and how it impacts the way they manage their farms. In Brussels, **Elisabeth Hidén** (Vice-president of CEJA) explained the importance of bridging the gap between the reality of the farm and the policy given the diversity of situations throughout Europe. **Wilco Brouwer de Koning** (dairy farmer, Vof Brouwer de Koning) debriefed the documentary with the participants and highlighted the importance of a long-term perspective. Dairy farming encompasses a multitude of aspects which all need to be preserved in order to ensure true sustainable production.



Ireland's ambassador to the Netherlands HE Dr Ann Derwin, DII's Conor Mulvihill and Miriam Ryan and EDA's Alexander Anton



ASSIFONTE President Dieter Kuijl with Carlos Martín Óvilo (DG AGRI)

Power in Partnership: Innovative solutions towards sustainable and resilient dairy systems

This panel focused on partnerships in the dairy industry in order to achieve resilience and sustainability. **Ilonka Nennie** (Sustainability Manager, Vreugdenhil Dairy Foods) gave participants an insight on how to create valuable partnerships to ensure the right balance between all our objectives. This search can only be made possible by understanding the entire value chain. **Lorenzo Van Haelst** (Managing Director Tetra Pak Franc and Benelux) demonstrated the importance of securing the access to safe and nutritious dairy. This can be done through the cooperation towards creative and innovative packaging solutions. **Dennis Rijnders** (Vice President Global Sales & Business Development for Bovaer) presented the ambition of dsm-firmenich of providing an innovative solution to the problem of GHG emissions from cows while allowing farmers and processors to continue to deliver nutritious and more sustainable dairy products. **Jan Bobbink** (CEO, Qlip) echoed the other panellists with his unique insights into the role of innovation for quality assurance of dairy through ever-evolving methodologies to measure the quality of raw milk.



Albert de Groot, Ilonka Nennie (Vreugdenhil), Jan Bobbink (Qlip), Dennis Rijnders (Bovaer), Lorenzo van Haelst (Tetra Pak)

Technical tours: Qlip Laboratory and Wageningen Dairy Campus

The Netherlands is internationally recognized as a frontrunner in agri-food innovation with the strong collaboration between science, industry, and government. Participants of our Convention were offered the opportunity to get engaged with the most prominent stakeholders in the Dutch Dairy Complex.



Qlip Laboratory, a Dutch laboratory specializing in milk and dairy product analysis and the **Wageningen Dairy Campus**, a unique research and innovation center affiliated with Wageningen University & Research.



Eric van Dam (CCO, Qlip B.V and Bactoforce



The NZO organising team: Trudy Sonneveld, Lydia Bronstring, Wilma van den Bosch, Tjitske Bolt

Save the date! EDA Annual Convention 2026 in Bratislava



Bratislava | 14. - 16. October

Dank U wel!

Our gala dinner at the Leeuwenbergh Conference Centre was the ideal moment for our EDA President **Albert de Groot** to express the gratitude of the European *lactosphere* to **Mireille Einwachter** and the NZO team for the perfect organisation of our conference.



Dank u wel for all your hard work!



EDA Annual Convention 2026 in Bratislava: SMZ Vice-President Peter Novorolnik and General Secretary Zuzana Nouzovská