

EDA Dairy Policy Conference 2026
Competitive, Resilient & Sustainable
Our European Dairy Strategy

#FutureDairy

Yesterday, we held our **Annual Dairy Policy Conference** in Brussels, where we were joined by over 200 dairy executives, representatives from the EU institutions, permanent representations, third country embassies and experts from Europe and beyond.

Under the theme '**Competitive, Resilient & Sustainable—Our European Dairy Strategy**', our conference was dedicated to discussing and exploring how the EU dairy sector can deliver a competitive, resilient and sustainable EU dairy sector for Europe.

With **Pierre Bascou**, Deputy Director-General at DG AGRI, **Damien Flynn**, Member of the Special Committee on Agriculture at the incoming Irish EU Presidency, **Marion Picot**, Secretary General of the CEJA/Young Farmers, **Catherine Combette**, Head of Unit at DG AGRI, **Maria Angela Esquivel**, Asia Corporate Affairs Director at Royal FrieslandCampina, **Songkhla Chulakasian**, Minister Counsellor of Agriculture at the Royal Thai Embassy and **Winarti Halim**, Agricultural Attaché for the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia we had an impressive speakers line-up.

EDA President **Albert de Groot** (CEO, Vreugdenhil Dairy Foods) opened the Conference, explaining the vital importance of the dairy sector:

"Food is not just a commodity. Food is stability, food is dignity, and in today's world, food is a peace-making force. In a rapidly changing world, we must not forget that EU dairy products are a strategic asset for Europe's global position. Many countries rely on our high-quality, safe, and sustainable products for their food security and nutritional needs."

"That's why our sector is not just economic — it is strategic."



EDA President Albert de Groot (CEO, Vreugdenhil Dairy Foods)

The European milk processing industry is ready to lead the way toward a dairy sector that is competitive, resilient and sustainable.

"A competitive dairy sector feeds economies, a sustainable dairy sector protects our future and a resilient dairy sector secures stability in an uncertain world," President **Albert de Groot** concluded.



Paradigm shift for European Agriculture & Dairy?

The first session, chaired by **George Morrison**, (Director of Global Public Affairs, Arla Foods), focused on the changing political landscape and what it would mean for EU agriculture and dairy and how it would impact the resilience, competitiveness on the global stage of Europe and the nutritional health of Europeans.

Marion Picot, Secretary General of the CEJA/Young Farmers, kicked off by underlining the importance of supporting a new generation in farming, what is most needed is strong and coordinated commitment from the EU, Member States, regions, and local governments. In particular, she called for a dedicated national-level budget within the CAP to better support young farmers and ensure generational renewal in the sector.



Marion Picot, Secretary General of the CEJA/Young Farmers



Damien Flynn (incoming Irish EU Presidency) with George Morrison (Arla Foods)

Damien Flynn outlined the priorities of the incoming Irish EU Presidency, which will focus on progress, security, competitiveness, and sustainability. He explained that advancing work on the CAP and the MFF is central for the upcoming Irish EU Presidency. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on developing a livestock strategy as part of these broader goals.

Pierre Bascou, Deputy Director General (DG AGRI) emphasized that the European Commission is seeking to make the agricultural sector more attractive, particularly to younger generations. Encouraging young people to enter farming is seen as essential for the future of the industry.



Pierre Bascou, DDG, DG AGRI

"The EU Commission wants to add 'attractiveness' to the equation, we want to get young people into the sector." He also stressed the strategic importance of the dairy sector for ensuring Europe's strategic autonomy and food security, noting *"food security is security"*.

EDA Annual Report 2025/2026

[Read it here](#)



Global trade – what else to expect in 2026?

The second session chaired by **Lise Andreassen Høyer**, (Chief Consultant at the Danish Dairy Board), turned the attention to the state of global trade, the future of European dairy exports and how the sector should pursue new trade strategies.



Catherine Combette, DG AGRI

Catherine Combette, Head of Unit at DG AGRI, set the scene and outlined where the EU is at with the negotiations of trade agreements including the EU – Australia free trade agreement ([read the EDA statement on the agreement here](#)).

She underscored the importance of dairy in exports *"dairy is one of the main drivers of our agri-exports and we are the world leader in cheese exports"*.

Songkhla Chulakasian, Minister Counsellor of Agriculture at the Royal Thai Embassy, highlighted Thailand's strategic position as a key hub in Southeast Asia, also as a major processor of food products. This role makes the country an attractive and valuable partner for the European Union as it seeks to expand its business presence in the region.



Songkhla Chulakasian, Minister Counsellor of Agriculture, Royal Thai Embassy

He also noted Thailand's interest in greater diversification of products entering the Thai market, signalling opportunities for the European dairy sector.



Lise Andreassen Høyer (DDB) with Winarti Halim (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia)

Winarti Halim, Agricultural Attaché for the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, emphasized that food security remains a top priority for Indonesia. In this context, she stressed the importance of concrete and substantial investment from international partners, including the EU, to support the country's agricultural and food systems.



Maria Angela Esquivel, Royal FrieslandCampina

Maria Angela Esquivel, Asia Corporate Affairs Director at Royal FrieslandCampina, gave the perspective of the private sector, described Southeast Asia as a dynamic and pragmatic region for business—one that is strongly growth-oriented and open to economic cooperation.

She underlined that, while the opportunities are significant, it is ultimately up to the European Union to take the initiative and actively engage with the region.

In his closing remarks, President **Albert de Groot** highlighted:

"Thousands of families rely on our dairy products for nutrition and it's up to us to make the dairy industry an attractive option for investing, operating, and partnering with."

EDA Annual Cheese buffet

The Conference ended with our famous **EDA Annual Cheese Buffet**, showcasing the very best of European cheese excellence. **A huge thank you to our Dutch, Luxembourgish, Danish, French Irish and Italian members for sponsoring!**



MEP Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR, NL) and EDA President Albert de Groot

Save the date! For our EDA Annual Convention 2026



Bratislava | Slovakia | 14.-16. October