

## The dairy sector announces in Brussels a historic roadmap to fight climate change with a 55% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030

*Decarbonisation, "green agenda" and animal welfare were the focus of the debates of leading experts gathered at the III Dairy Sustainability Forum*

*InLac advances that the dairy sector will reduce ammonia emissions (3% per year), promote the circular economy and favor the quality of soil, water and ecosystem services*

Madrid/Brussels, 30 Oct 2024.- The [Interprofessional Dairy Organisation \(InLac\)](#) today organised the III Dairy Sustainability Forum under the title "The challenge of decarbonisation: The European dairy sector, committed to the environment and the fight against climate change", within the framework of the campaign "[Count on European](#) dairy products" co-financed with the help of the EU, in which some "historic" commitments have been outlined that will mark a before and after for this economic activity.

This Forum, which was attended by economic and social agents and leading experts, has made it possible to anticipate a green agenda that will allow significant progress to be made in decarbonisation and the fight against climate change over the coming years. "In our roadmap for an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable dairy sector, InLac will make major commitments to reduce Greenhouse Gases, by 55% by 2030, also ammonia emissions (3% less each year) and promote the circular economy and the quality of soils, water and ecosystem services", said the managing director of [InLac](#), **Nuria María Arribas**.

"The dairy sector is firmly committed both to the consumer – providing them with healthy, nutritious, safe, innovative and sustainable food – and to the Planet because every day we are more efficient with resources and the environment," said the managing director.

In any case, **Arribas** also recalled that the European dairy sector should be recognised for its positive contributions, since "we are facing an engine of economic development, job creation and rural development while we could give multiple examples of contributions to the environment". Thus, he stressed that pastures sequester carbon dioxide - one of the gases responsible for climate change - and that the activity keeps ecosystems cared for while "activities such as grazing contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and favor the maintenance of the landscape balance by avoiding fires and stopping the lack of control of the forest mass."

Similarly, he stressed that "the sector is undertaking strong investments in sustainability and efficient use of natural resources in milk production processes, reducing the water and carbon footprint and improving packaging towards more recyclable and circular packaging". "It is an essential dairy sector for economic, social and environmental sustainability. And this positive contribution must be explained and recognised by our Administrations and by consumers", **Arribas** said.

As InLac recalls, all EU countries produce milk in a ranking with important players such as Germany, France, Poland, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland and Spain (in this case, the largest EU producer of pure sheep's cheese and the second largest producer of pure goat's cheese, as striking data). In Spain alone, the production, processing and marketing chain has a turnover of around 13,000 million euros a year and generates more than 70,000 direct jobs (more than 30,000 of them in the dairy industry). The sector has 1,700 authorised centres for collection and processing while 17,100 farmers deliver milk, of which 10,300 are cow, 2,800 sheep and 4,000 goats.

How to achieve a more sustainable European dairy sector? Is it possible to minimize the environmental impact? Is public opinion aware of all the positive impacts of the activity? Are the new rules on animal transport sustainable? Leading experts have shed light on these and other aspects.

The Deputy Head of the Animal Production Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture, **Carlos Martín Óvilo**, stressed in his speech that ensuring a sustainable and competitive dairy sector in the EU "is a strategic objective". "From a social and economic point of view, livestock farming is vital to provide food and other essential products to citizens and maintain the vitality of rural areas. However, the EU livestock sector is currently facing significant challenges, including environmental sustainability," he said.



"Although livestock contributes to greenhouse gas emissions (falling) and air, water and soil pollution, it also provides positive externalities such as landscape maintenance, carbon sequestration, ecological fertilizers, supply of high-value proteins, etc. The CAP has a wide range of instruments to reduce negative impacts and value positive ones," argued Martín Óvilo.

**Tomás García Azcárate**, agricultural economist and member of the Dairy Sustainability Committee of the campaign "[Count on European dairy products](#)", has highlighted the current production model and its relevance as a factor of greater competitiveness in demanding international markets. "Europe offers quality products, a source of pleasure for consumers and with the highest level of health guarantee in the world. In addition, the dairy sector, hand in hand with InLac, has presented its sustainable roadmap for the coming years," he said. "The strategy is a reflection of the commitment to consolidate the activity of milk production and transformation in Spanish rural areas, guaranteeing its maintenance and that of the associated ecosystem services. It will allow all the actors in the chain to transmit to society and the administrations the effort that the entire sector is making", he stressed.

**Santiago Campos** (Asaja Brussels) also drew attention to the benefits of the European dairy sector, which are not sufficiently known or recognised. In his speech, he addressed the situation of the agricultural sector, from a European perspective, with a special emphasis on the uncertainties of the looming animal welfare package, trade agreements with third countries, the impact of the European Green Deal and "its regulations based exclusively on environmental sustainability".

The new EU regulation on transport has been the focus of part of the debate, with contributions from **Paula de Vera**, senior Policy Advisor at COPA-Cogeca – the organisation that brings together professional agricultural and cooperative organisations; and **Jaume Bernis**, a farmer with more than 40 years of experience, head of livestock sectors at COAG and advisor to Group III of the EESC.

**De Vera** has defended that animal welfare requirements must be based on scientific evidence and consider the economic and social viability of farms, without forgetting consistency with other EU policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) or international trade, and that the sustainability of our farms and respect for European traditions and cultural heritage must be starting points in any animal welfare reform.

In his opinion, "it is essential to carry out an in-depth socio-economic study to prevent small and medium-sized farms from being the most affected by new bureaucratic requirements and additional costs". "Animal health and welfare are closely linked, and new measures must ensure that both aspects are improved without generating disproportionate negative effects," he said.

For his part, **Jaume Bernis** - rapporteur of the EESC's NAT/ 918 Opinion on Animal Welfare in the Transport of Live Animals - has argued that "obviously, farmers are the first ones interested in our animals travelling with maximum welfare", but any change should, in his opinion, have an exhaustive economic impact study. social and environmental of the cost overruns of the measures that are proposed.

Agriculture and livestock farming in the European Union are among the most efficient and advanced in the world in terms of commitment to the climate and the environment. Quality, traceability and food safety are other strengths of the European production model. Through the campaign "[Count on European dairy products](#)", promoted by InLac, these values are disseminated without forgetting the beneficial properties of dairy foods within a balanced and varied diet, such as the Mediterranean and the Atlantic (3 dairy products a day), accompanied by regular exercise.

