



Opinion Piece by Ramón Armengol

Farmers are fed up with false facts

Brussels, 10 October 2019 - Recently, we kicked off the European MeattheFacts campaign, which aims to dispel false information or myths about animal husbandry and meat. The aim is to refute, with scientific arguments and objective data, the countless accusations experienced by the livestock sector and to be able to show society the potential consequences for society if livestock production would end.

Simplistic messages and headlines intended to shock the public have made a dent in the reputation of livestock farming; in the first place we are blamed for animal mistreatment. Nowadays, with the pressure of animal welfare groups, society is more aware and improvements have been made in legislation that we have come to apply positively in our farms. A lot of education and awareness-raising would have been needed to explain why certain handling practices are carried out, often to protect the animals themselves (tail docking, dehorning, etc.), and an urbanised society may not understand. But now simply explaining practices is not enough, and radicalised groups are harassing the sector directly calling for the eradication of any kind of livestock production.

As for the effects on our health, the report of the International Agency for Research on Cancer about the danger of excessive consumption of red meat, has been refuted recently by a review of hundreds of studies that states how the WHO was rushed into its conclusions. Without questioning the credibility of the scientific community, we must consider a review of the arguments. Nutrition is too complex to attribute to a single food type, purely positive or negative properties. As MEP Clara Aguilera pointed in the presentation of the MeattheFacts campaign, our reference must be the Mediterranean diet, with a lot of fruit and vegetables, but also meat.

The publication of the Panel of Experts on Climate Change, included more than 28 measures, but, not surprisingly, only the need to reduce meat consumption received media coverage. Although we do not want to be blamed for climate change, we take the environmental challenge head on without hesitation. We are adapting to new environmental requirements and we have the technology to do so. One example is the 40% improvement in conversion rates over the last ten years.

Eleven European organisations are taking part in this European initiative in defence of livestock with a single voice, in order to put a stop to the messages that unduly mix health issues, environmental information and arguments with an anthropomorphic bias. Disinformation and false myths are taking root in society. Although the routine use of antibiotics has been banned for more than a decade, only 38% of Europeans are aware of this fact. Many others believe that they are used indiscriminately. Another example is the perception that it is better to eat a processed veggie burger with more than 20 ingredients than a simple and nutritious steak.

The message is clear, livestock farming is part of the solution and not part of the problem, we are crucial for feeding a growing population, for the planet's biodiversity and for promoting a circular agri-food system. Cooperatives have the intrinsic value of basing our operation on a circular economy, and in this future system we are working hard with our producers, helping to internalize costs, dedicating resources to research and providing the tools to lead this transformation by winning every day in sustainability.

Ramón Armengol
Vice President of Cogeca and Pig farmer

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About Ramón Armengol



Ramón Armengol, is a livestock farmer and the Vice-President of Cogeca. He owns a pig farm that he manages together with his son, a young farmer. There are eight employees working on the farm. Mr Armengol is a board member of Cooperativa d'Ivars in Lleida (Spain). This Cooperative has 3 615 livestock partners who offer their services to the members by producing and marketing both livestock and grain products.

Mr Armengol is also a board member of Cooperativas de Cataluña and Cooperativas Agro-alimentarias de España. The latter brings together almost 4 000 agricultural cooperatives and one million members from across Spain. It records a total turnover of 26 billion euros and it represents 60 % of Spain's total agricultural production. Mr Armengol's farm relies on his cooperative. It is thanks to its support, that he and other farmers in the same area can carry out their agricultural activities.