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Eucolait reaction to the EU-India Free Trade Agreement

Eucolait takes note of the conclusion of negotiations for an ambitious free trade agreement between the European Union and India, announced this morning. As an organisation that supports open, predictable and rules-based trade, Eucolait welcomes trade agreements concluded by the EU that enhance cooperation and economic integration.

However, we strongly regret the apparent exclusion of the dairy sector from the scope of the agreement. While we await the publication of the legal texts, dairy products do not appear to be among the agri-food products benefiting from improved market access. This represents a clear missed opportunity for our industry.

India is home to the world's largest population and is also the world's largest milk producer. Its dairy policy is firmly anchored in self-sufficiency, with high import tariffs remaining the norm. As a result, EU dairy exports to India are currently limited, largely to lactose and whey powders, which are subject to comparatively lower tariffs of around 20–30%.

Eucolait recognises the sensitivity of the dairy sector in India, given its market structure and the predominance of household and small family farms. Nevertheless, limited and carefully calibrated concessions - such as tariff-rate quotas for selected dairy products or ingredients - would not have had any meaningful impact on the Indian market, given its sheer size.

Beyond tariffs, Eucolait hopes that the agreement will contribute to addressing existing non-tariff barriers on the Indian market. We look forward to the publication of further details, in particular regarding import procedures and regulatory requirements. We further call for a review of the scope of the agreement in due course, with a view to ensuring that the dairy sector is not left behind.

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