

German Farmers Stage Huge Tractorcade Protests: ‘No Farmers, No Food, No Future!’

by Rainer Apel

Feb. 1—This year’s “Green Week” in Berlin, the big, annual international agriculture exhibition, took place January 17-26, and was accompanied by the most massive protest actions of German farmers in many years. Opening day saw 5,000 tractors rolling into Berlin, the German capital, from all parts of the country. Additional protest rallies were staged regionally, ranging from 2,500 tractors in Stuttgart, down to 150 tractors in each of many smaller cities. The list of larger cities that saw farmers’ protest actions on that day is impressive: Hanover, Bremen, Kiel, Dresden, Mainz, Fulda, Dessau, Magdeburg, Giessen, Saarbruecken, and many more. All in all, tens of thousands of farmers with their tractors took to the streets in protest. Those tractor rallies continued throughout Germany during the entire ten days of the Berlin agricultural exhibition.

With slogans like, “No Farmers, No Food, No Future” and “We Work for Your Food,” placed on big placards plastered on the front of their tractors, the farmers protested against the excessive new regulations planned by the European Commission, which claim to be protecting the climate, nature and wildlife, but are in reality ruinous for farmers, and helping nothing. In addition, farmers are demonstrating against the impossibly low prices they receive.

Under the European Union (EU) green mandates, there are planned decrees of all kinds that include cutting the use of fertilizers by 20 percent; placing a total ban on nitrate fertilizer; banning the planting of cover crops, the “between crops” sown during the periods



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Farmers demonstrating in Berlin, Germany on January 17, 2020. The sign reads: ‘They don’t sow and they don’t reap, but they know everything!’

when the main crops are not growing; and banning insecticides and pesticides. Finally, there is the idea that farmers should exit agriculture altogether and switch to becoming “energy producers” by turning their arable fields into wind power parks.

On the price situation, highlighted in these protests, dairy farming has now become a loss-making venture, with farmers receiving only 20 cents per produced liter of milk, while 40 cents (at least) is needed to make any profit at all.

Finally, the German farmers are protesting against being slandered as “insect killers” and “soil poisoners” by the greenies, for whom the protection of insects ranks above providing for the security of food for mankind—for which purpose the intensive methods of modern agriculture are the best precondition.

The EU Is Trying to Starve People

The German farmers are also pointing out that the planting of cover crops—“between crops”—is crucial

to improving the soil for the later planting of main crops, and that trying to ban that practice by EU decrees would lower the yields and harvest volume considerably.

On the other hand, no ban exists for those non-farm investment funds and other speculative financial entities that are making profits through “land-grabbing.” Speculators acquire farms that have been driven into high debt and can no longer be maintained by farmers. Land-grabbing has become an increasing pattern along with the rise in heavily-indebted family farms. Protection against land-grabbing has become a leading demand of the protesting farmers. The increase in land-grabbing has gone right along with the expansion of cost-cutting, mass production of low-quality food at the expense of traditional farming.

European Commission (EC) policies overall, running under the misleading name, “Common Agricultural Policy” (CAP) have put a huge question mark over the future of farming. Farmers have become increasingly hesitant to make major investments, because their projects and improvements are almost certain to be a failure, due to the unending interference of EU bureaucrats into the process of producing food. A survey carried out by the Thünen Institute in Germany has delivered alarming evidence of the consequences of disinvestment in the agricultural sector, which in Germany alone employs 600,000 people—including those who manufacture modern tractors and agro-machinery, those who produce fertilizers, and those who construct agricultural facilities like livestock buildings.

The EC is a main target of the protests in Germany—as it is in France, Netherlands, Ireland, and elsewhere. But the German protests are also focused on the German



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The woman's sign reads: “Family Farms Not Factory Farms!” Farmers' demonstration in Berlin, Germany on January 17, 2020.

government, particularly on Agriculture Minister Julia Klöckner, who has been paying weak lip service to the farmers' cause, but continues to serve as a transmission belt for the greenie policies of the EC in Germany. Revealing is Klöckner's announced project of launching regional events from March on, at which farmers are supposed to enter a “dialogue” with greenies. The framework of these events is the unscientific claim that “climate protection is without any alternative, so farmers have to accept that.”

Huge Tractor Rallies

Germany's farmers are not accepting that proposition. At the huge tractor rally on January 17 in Berlin, the slogan on many banners read: “They do not sow, they do not harvest, but they claim to know everything!” The farmers denounced the notorious ecology-mongers, who unceasingly design new ways to burden farmers with decrees and production bans. Farmers are

not against dialogue, but they insist that politicians begin taking the concerns of the countryside seriously, which includes real economic investments instead of pumping taxpayer money into new rural wind farms.

On that issue, farmers have broad support from other layers of the population that live and work in the countryside. The dramatic loss of votes for the leading establishment parties in recent regional elections is the proverbial writing on the wall. The established parties' disinter-

est in the farm sector mirrors their disinterest in investing in regional public infrastructure of all kinds—roads, railroads, waterways, bridges, and so on.

But so far, Agriculture Minister Klöckner has not shown any inclination to change her attitude. She has even created a special hashtag, #Landkinder (countryside kids), presenting, among other absurdities, an



CC/Olaf Kosinsky

Julia Klöckner, German Agriculture Minister.

image that shows two girls lighting a bulb with a small windmill standing in a garden. This is unabashed propaganda for the transformation of the agricultural sector into a sphere of experiments with inefficient, and very costly “renewable energy sources” like wind and solar power.

Being discontented with the toothlessness of their official agricultural associations, the German farmers have developed communication channels of their own, working via internet media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Their new protest movement is called *Land schafft Verbindung* (The Land Makes the Link); it has adopted a mode of surprise in protest actions. One hundred tractors or more may show up during rush hour in the morning for short road blockades, then, after one or two hours, roll off again in a well-coordinated way, only to return for another tractor rally in the late afternoon or evening. Bonfire vigils are held on the fields to voice protest during the evenings and at night, and farmers are also appearing in impressive numbers, all of a sudden, at public events featuring leading politicians, to take over discussions to make their cause heard.

Creative Interventions

This surprise method has been quite efficient, and the protest movement keeps growing. The dynamic developing in Germany now greatly resembles the one seen in the Yellow Vest citizen protest movement in neighboring France, which began as a broad public outcry against new taxation plans of the French government, but has recently begun to tackle other economic issues.

On January 31, spontaneous protest actions in Germany were coordinated by the Land Makes the Link network, bringing out tractors in many cities. This was prompted by the government’s decision the day before, to grant farmers EU1 billion in compensation for losses from the impact of the EU’s new restrictive fertilizer decree. The farmers issued a statement denouncing the so-called compensation as a “bribe for silence,” and announced that they would continue their protests. They delivered the statement to the *Bundestag* (Parliament) members’ offices, in addition to state-level officials.

In Lower Saxony, over a dozen farmers parked their tractors at the entrance to the state capital. They were able to talk directly with the legislators; others targeted



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Yellow Vests protest in Tours, France on February 2, 2020.

towns throughout the state, including Leer, Emden, Papenburg, and Walsrode. The farmers spontaneously showed up at offices of political parties to deliver their protest, at the center of which was the demand that German politicians finally make an effort *to change* EU policies, instead of swallowing them uncontested, and then using the tactic of giving farmers some money to try to calm them down. Henriette Struss of the farmers’ protest network told the media, “We won’t be corrupted.” Others called the compensation an “insult.”

The Farmers Commission of the Schiller Institute has been intervening into this building protest ferment in Germany with leaflets pointing to the necessity of an in-depth reform of the general banking system with a clear emphasis on prioritizing commercial banking and real-economic investment over the pumping of money into derivatives and other financial bubbles by investment banks. The leaflets call for a debt write-off for highly indebted farms, and making available low-interest credit for new investments and modernizations in the farming sector. The leaflets clearly state support for family farming and the protection of the countryside against speculative financial interests that want to replace wheat and rye with crops grown only for bio-fuels.

One Humankind

The Schiller Institute leaflet circulated January 17 also stressed the point that action on the big picture—

for the strategic defeat of geopolitics—is essential. Schiller Institute President Helga Zepp-LaRouche wrote of the necessity for “A New Bretton Woods credit system with long-range cooperation with the New Silk Road, by means of which the industrialization of Southwest Asia and Africa can be organized,” and other features of this broad perspective, including replacing “the backward-looking geopolitics and confrontation with Russia and China . . . [with] confidence-building cooperation to achieve the common aims of mankind.” Zepp-LaRouche cautioned against a limited view:

[There are] millions of people who are now taking to the streets in many countries. . . . The danger lies in campaigning only on the particular issue that pertains to oneself. Therefore, farmers are protesting against the existential threat to farmers, truck drivers are protesting against the high fuel prices, and health care providers are protesting against staffing shortfalls,

etc. What will happen to such protest movements? In the best-case outcome, there would be a little concession on a concrete issue, a few settlements, and then demoralization would set in, and the protest would fade away. . . . There is a solution. It depends on taking responsibility for the whole, and not merely for their own particular issue.

In this spirit, U.S. farm belt leaders sent a message of support on the first of February to the German farmers. (See box.)

Faced with a situation in which—according to United Nations reports—more than a billion humans do not have enough to eat and are constantly threatened by starvation, it is a genocidal crime to destroy efficient farming with greenie ideologies. In all the pro-agriculture campaigns of the Schiller Institute, there has been one leading slogan: “Redet nicht von Überschüssen, solange Millionen hungern müssen!” (Don’t talk of surpluses when millions are going hungry!)

WE ARE ROLLING WITH YOU!

Message to Farm Friends in Germany From Farmers and Ranchers in the United States

Feb. 1—We farmers, ranchers and agriculture friends in the United States send our support to your fight in Germany. You are right! Let us put a stop to green hysteria. Let us have fair pricing and independent family farms. No more mega-cartel control.

We can produce good food, care for the land and water, and carry out real science and love for mankind. Starting now! There is no limit to growth, and never too many people, once we get our nations on track.

We call on the great-power leaders of Europe, the U.S., Russia, China, India and any other nation willing, to get together, to start working out the measures for a new era of peace and plenty. End the commodity speculation and bail-outs. Put in Glass-Steagall type regulations for sound banking. Issue credit for new infrastructure for high-tech electricity, transportation, water systems, and more, especially space-travel agriculture. No more green cave-man outlook. Fire or retire all the professional negotiators for rotten cartel-serving trade deals and

green swindles. End the sanctions and warfare.

We, the undersigned, express our Trans-Atlantic support.

You have revved up the engines. We are rolling with you!

IOWA—Bob Baker, Keota

KANSAS—Tony Anderson, Vice President, Kansas Cattlemen’s Association

KANSAS—Tyler Dupy, Executive Director, Kansas Cattlemen’s Association

MINNESOTA—Andy Olson, Windom

NORTH DAKOTA—Lorraine Wagner, Linton

SOUTH DAKOTA—Ron Wieczorek, Mt. Vernon; former Independent candidate for U.S. Congress 2018

INDIANA—Jim Benham, President Indiana Farmers Union

Please circulate our greetings and contact us any time, including to coordinate Trans-Atlantic action—Robert “Bob” Baker bb888k@gmail.com