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Brussels, 20 of April, 2016

Dear Mr. Phil Hogan
Member of the European Commission
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

As the European farmers' situation is alarming, especially in the dairy sector in my Region, Azores, caused by the Russian embargo and the end of milk quotas, and considering the several measures that the Commission recently announced and the huge European opportunities that are available for farmers, but are not known by them in Azores, I would like to invite you to a seminar that I am organizing in Azores called "European opportunities for Azorean farmers", on the 27th May, 2016 (this date is flexible according to your availability). My purpose is to stimulate a debate about the promotion of EU farms products programmes, access to new markets and ways of resisting this prolonged period of market crisis, centred in the dairy sector of the Azores, as an European Outermost Region. Regarding this, I also would like to invite the person in charge for this issue in your services that you think that could help the Azorean farmers to have some solutions, to engage in more adapted and successful strategies to face this ongoing crisis and specially to give them some hope about their future.

Dear Commissioner,

Azores is an European Outermost Region, composed by 9 islands in the middle of North Atlantic Ocean, and has agriculture as their main economic activity, with a huge importance in social and rural cohesion. It represents around 40% of the regional economy and more than 12% of employment, nonetheless almost 50% of the active population works directly or indirectly in this sector. The agricultural surface is around 120 000 ha, and comprehends



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13.541 farms, with an average dimension of 8,9ha and with an average of 28,2 cows. The dairy sector in Azores represents around 35% of the total of the national milk production, although we only represent 2,6% of the Portuguese territory.

As Azores have an ultra-peripheral situation and dispersion in 9 small islands, remoteness, small size, difficult topography and climate, we are economic dependent on few products and productions as a result of a very difficult agriculture diversification. Around 88% of the Utilized Agriculture Area (UAA) is made up of permanent grassland and pasture used for extensive livestock farming and only 10% of UAA is dedicated to arable production, overwhelmingly used to cultivate green maize to feed livestock. Therefore, we are highly vulnerable to sector-specific downturns such as the one currently experienced in the dairy sector and we believe that it would be very important for us that if not you, someone of your Cabinet could also attend this event, to see in loco our difficulties but also our potential, especially when the revision of POSEI programme is being prepared.

Thanking in advance your kind support and attention and hopefully your positive answer, please accept my kindest regards,

