

Local ranchers blame vegetarians for food crisis

By Stoffel A.

YPERS, BELGUIM –As the world suffers a major food crisis, people are looking for answers—answers as to where this crisis comes from, and how it can be solved. UVB (Pig Farmers Union) representative Jan Deschepper claims to have found the cause. “Of course there are several reasons for this crisis”, Jan says, “but the core problem is the recent fad of children becoming vegetarians. These kids refuse to eat meat!” According to Jan, vegetarians compensate their lack of important vitamin-rich meat by eating more vegetables and fruit, which causes a rise in demand, and price, for these products. “But that is just the start! Because our meat industry predictions didn’t take this rise in vegetarianism into account, we now have an overcapacity of living meat that needs to be fed.” Jan explains how meat producers, the ranchers, now have 18% more livestock in their ranches. “We can’t just let those poor animals die, so we have to feed them. This creates another upward pressure on prices of corn and wheat.” Many Belgian ranchers are heading towards bankruptcy, since meat prices have plummeted, and productions costs have risen sharply over the past months. “We’ve thought about exporting our meat overseas, but the rise in oil prices make transportation too expensive to compete with locals overseas. There was also talk of donating 500 tons meat to the UN food program. “Not that we really care about hungry Palestinians”, Jan explains, “but it would be cheaper if the UN took our pigs and gave them away, then continuing to feed the pigs our self.” The UN food program, however, did not accept this generous offer. “It has come this far, that some of our members have



photo: wild pigs at destroyed field in Ypers region (Belgium)

threatened to release their pigs into the wild because Belgian trade law forbids to sell products under the production price”, Jan says. There have been cases where pigs were released into the wild before. Wild pigs, however, cause severe damage to plantations and can in some cases destroy entire fields. In so called ‘wild pig danger zones’, harvestings have dropped by 34%, which caused another rise in price on the local market. Asked if the logical solution would be that pig farmers should reduce their production, Jan explained this is impossible because the whole Belgian agriculture industry is build upon the idea of never-ending expansion. “Farmers all have bills to pay, families to feed and loans to repay... No, the only short-term solution we see is for these plant eaters to get a grip and start eating pork again! There really is no other way.”

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