Nutritional security put to the test: DVT CALLS FOR LESS RED TAPE RATHER THAN NEW REGULATIONS

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More than 300 guests attended the 26th DVT Annual Conference at the Hotel Estrel in Berlin. The outcome after two days: a clear call to politicians, critical insights from academia and industry – and a new leadership structure designed to make the German Feed Association (DVT) more effective in the years to come.

REDUCING RED TAPE AS A KEY DEMAND

"At this stage, we need forward-looking political decisions," DVT President Cord Schiplage made clear at the opening. "Reducing bureaucracy and bilateral agreements are urgently needed for a competitive and crisis-resilient Europe." According to the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food, domestic animal feed already covers around 88 per cent of the crude protein requirements of the German animal feed sector. However, when it comes to vitamins and amino acids, the sector remains heavily dependent on third countries, particularly China. The German feed market, with 253 compound feed manufacturers, has managed to hold its own in this environment: in the 2025/2026 marketing year, production increased slightly for the second consecutive year, reaching 22.5 million tonnes.

In the centre of the DVT's criticism lies the EU Deforestation Regulation, which – following two postponements – is now due to come into force on 31 December 2026. According to DVT surveys, around 90 per cent of the soya meal used in Germany is already deforestation-free; nevertheless, the association estimates the direct additional costs at around 1.05 billion euros based on 35 million tonnes of soya consumption. "In our view, the planned regulation is unnecessary and represents a further disruptive factor in what is already an unstable period. Once again, we are faced with a regulation that imposes a burden rather than providing relief," said Schiplage. The DVT had already documented this progress in sustainable soya procurement in August in its own soya progress report: the ecological footprint of soya depends less on the country of origin than on production conditions and supply chains. "We must base our decisions on the facts."

In the EU's ongoing omnibus procedures aimed at reducing administrative burdens, the DVT also insists on the application of the risk principle to residue tolerance limits for plant protection products and calls for impact assessments regarding the resilience of the entire food and feed chain. The DVT takes a more positive view of the new legal framework for new genomic techniques (NGT): it recognises the potential of new breeding methods for agriculture. In this regard, the association would like to see a uniform international legal framework for labelling.

The DVT is urging caution regarding the EU protein strategy: the self-sufficiency rate for feed protein crops is set to rise from 25 to 35 per cent by 2035. The association warns against unrealistic expectations of rapid implementation and refers to calculations by the European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC), which forecasts an additional maize import requirement. According to Schiplage,

bilateral agreements could present more opportunities than risks for supply. Energy and logistics also came into focus: the recent low water levels on Germany's inland waterways demonstrated how quickly supply chains can be disrupted if a mode of transport fails. Together with other agricultural associations, the DVT is calling on the Federal Government to take measures to stabilise and strengthen the infrastructure in the long term.

AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

The series of presentations, featuring a wide-ranging programme, broadened participants' horizons beyond their own sector. The invited speakers from academia and industry provided fresh perspectives and delivered clear messages: Prof. Friedrich Heinemann (ZEW – Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research) opened the event with ideas for a resilient Europe in terms of financial and economic policy. From a Brazilian perspective, Eduardo Sampaio Marques, Agricultural Attaché at the Brazilian Embassy, highlighted Brazil's role in global food security: little scope for new arable land, high investment requirements, and no export restrictions. According to his assessment, the EU Deforestation Regulation falls short, as Europe represents only a small part of the global market.

During the panel discussion on the conference theme 'Food Security Under Stress' with Stefanie Sabet (German Farmers' Association), Dr. Torsten Staack (ISN - Interessengemeinschaft der Schweinehalter Deutschlands) and Alexander Anton (European Dairy Association), it became clear that farmers are under cost pressure due to national and global conditions, that expectations of the federal government have so far been disappointed, and that security of supply requires competitive conditions as well as greater innovation and investment. Distortions in the pigmeat market were discussed, and the question was raised as to whether policymakers lack the will to bring about improvement. The conclusion: competitiveness is not an end. The event concluded with a focus on practical matters, including a plea for a passion for agriculture and for easy access to farming for children and young people.

NEW LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE: ACTING MORE SWIFTLY AND WITH GREATER UNITY

The General Assembly on the second day of the conference marked a significant change: the DVT elected a new leadership team and, at the same time, reorganised its management structure. In future, the Presidium and the Executive Board will have clearly separate responsibilities in order to streamline decision-making processes and position the association for the tasks ahead. "Our sector faces political decisions that will have a direct impact on the animal feed industry. As the DVT, we must therefore act swiftly, with a united front and a clear voice. The new structure creates the conditions for this," says the new DVT President, Bernd Schmitz. The aim is to make the association's political stance more visible: "We must make this role even more visible in the political debate – in Berlin, in Brussels and in dialogue with our partners. To achieve this, we need clear lines of responsibility and strong networks," says Dr. Sebastean Schwarz, who will chair the DVT Executive Board in future.

This was preceded the previous evening by the presentation of the DVT Award 2026, with which the association honoured Dr. Hermann-Josef Baaken, as spokesperson for the management board, for his many years of work. The DVT has always been adept at identifying issues at an early stage and communicating them in a way that suits the target audience, medium and occasion. The new structure builds on this and positions the association to be more resilient and effective in the future.