

During the weekend, the Danas editorial office received several photos from larger and smaller markets where the milk shelves are empty or half-empty, and the most common question from the readers who sent them was why there is a shortage and when the market will calm down. Although the shortage was first felt in the capital, which is mostly supplied by Imlek, it quickly spread to other smaller producers and the rest of the country.

- Consumers are confused, surprised by what is happening and worried about what will happen tomorrow. We have in mind all these increases in primary production, which are the basis for the formation of retail prices - Petar Bogosavljević from the Consumer Movement told Danas.

He believes that the shortage of milk these days is partially objectively determined by the drought, which certainly had an impact on the reduction of production, but he also suspects that all of this is part of the pressure to increase the price of milk and milk products.

- The fact that the state authorities claim that there is no shortage, I think, is more in the function of softening the picture of what is really happening, as well as to ensure higher prices. They have already jumped in the last few months by about 40 percent, and this is supported by the decision of the state authorities to maximize them at that level. From the consumer's point of view, this is very inappropriate and there have been some indications of this problem. However, there was no organized reaction in some other situations when, due to what is happening on the market, the consumer's voice should have been heard - emphasizes Bogosavljević.

According to Nenad Budimović, secretary of the Association for Livestock Breeding of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, the fact that the supply in stores is reduced does not yet indicate shortages because there are enough of all other products from the structure of the dairy industry.

- Pasteurized and long-term milk decreased probably due to reduced primary production, which is a consequence of a prolonged severe drought and unfavorable weather conditions, which caused the quality of roughage for cattle to drop. To that should be added the effect of consumption, because it increased at the moment when the first signs of a decrease in deliveries appeared, and this also happened with sugar and other products, so it returned to normal very quickly - says Budimović and adds that a certain the period until production normalizes.

It also indicates that the current situation is the result of several decades of bad attitude towards dairy cattle and that systemic measures are needed to eliminate the problems of genetics, incentives, land lease...

- It is true that the livestock fund was reduced by about 55,000 heads, that is, 700,000 liters of milk less is produced per day, but that was several years ago, it is not a new moment. It is also true that the sour-milk program brings more profits, for which dairies would be happy

to change the production structure, but they generally have annual contracts with stores on the quantity and type of products they deliver. The decree on limiting the price for two types of milk with 2.8 percent milk fat has no effect either, because it is also prescribed that they must maintain the volume of deliveries to stores at the level of the annual average - Budimović points out.

He admits that livestock farmers are dissatisfied with the purchase price, which is why the livestock fund is decreasing, but he reminds that the state gives a premium of 15 dinars for every liter produced and delivered, that there are incentives per head of cattle, per hectare. - The point is that all the incentives and premiums provided for in this production are paid on time in order to have an effect. It is useless to write on paper that a certain amount is due to livestock farmers if it is not paid. The state must accelerate this. But when the money arrives, production cannot be immediately raised. All those engaged in milk production are farmers at the same time, they have to produce food for their cattle themselves in order to be profitable, and they will first put the money into preparations for the autumn work that produces food for the farms - explains Budimović and emphasizes that in dairy cattle farming the production cycle is much longer, there is the slowest turnover of capital. The Ministries of Trade and Agriculture did not respond to Danas' questions about the causes of the shortage and the estimate of when they expect normalization on the market.

Specific year

- The current number of heads gives these results and they cannot be improved quickly. Until a few years ago, we produced 1.57 billion liters of milk annually, and now 250 million liters less. We also have the implementation of contracted exports to CREFTE countries, these are foreign trade agreements that must be respected. Therefore, the regular supply of the market is affected by many factors, and this year is also specific because other unfavorable conditions were followed by drought, high temperatures and a reduced number of milking cows - says Nenad Budimović from PKS, Danas writes.