

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: German Farmers Protest Negative Narrative

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Report Highlights:

On May 28, 2020, several hundred farmers protested in multiple German cities in response to the Minister of the Environment's presentation of the "State of Nature in Germany " report in which farmers feel unfairly singled out as the sole culprit of a reduction of biodiversity in Germany. Instead they demanded that their contribution to nature conservation and biodiversity be recognized.

On May 19, Svenja Schulze (center left Social Democratic Party), the German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) presented the “State of Nature in Germany”- which was compiled by BMU and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). In her presentation, Schulze claimed “too much fertilizer, too much pesticides application, and cutting permanent pastures too often,” as the main reasons why “these areas become of less and less value for nature.”

Farmers feel they are being unfairly singled out as the sole culprit for the reduction in biodiversity. The grass-root movement *Land schafft Verbindung* (Rural Areas Foster Connection, LsV) responded by demanding Minister Schulze and State Secretary Jochen Flasbarth step down. On May 28, LsV also organized farmer protests in multiple German cities, including Berlin, Hannover, Muenster, and Potsdam. Due to COVID-19 related restrictions the number of tractors and people per demonstration was limited to a varying degree depending on corresponding State regulations. Nonetheless, protests were mentioned in the main evening news of the German-wide TV station ZDF.



In Potsdam, LsV Brandenburg section (LsV BB) demonstrated in front of the “house of nature”, where ten environmental NGOs have their regional Brandenburg offices, most importantly the *Naturschutzbund* (Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union, NABU). Farmers consider NABU of special importance in the discussion as BMU State Secretary Jochen Flasbarth was the NABU president from 1992 to 2003. LsV BB presented NABU chairperson Friedhelm Schmitz-Jersch a position paper and described the discussion as constructive.



Left to right: Stefanie Peters/Agrofarm Nauen, Friedhelm Schmitz-Jersch/chairperson of NABU Brandenburg, Antje Schulze/Director Women in Rural Areas Havelland



Translation: @NABU: We groom permanent pastures full of biodiversity. For 300 years! Your farmers from Havelland¹

The demands for Schulze and Flasbarth to step down can equally be seen as an expression of frustration on the farmers' side as well as an attempt to create publicity in an environment where news and discussions are dominated by COVID-19 and people worry about their health and economic well-being. Post does not expect it will result in any immediate reaction on the Ministry's side.

Attachments:

No Attachments.

¹ Havelland is a region in the German Federal State on Brandenburg, North-West of Berlin