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Minhoff calls upon political decision-makers and industry to make a stronger commitment to Europe

Coinciding with the opening of the International Green Week 2019 the Federation of German Food and Drinks Industries (BVE) is releasing its preliminary forecast for German food industry results in 2018. Early forecasts show that year-on-year figures rose slightly by 0.3 per cent to 180 billion euros. Thus, economic performance in this sector remained steady after record business in 2017, reflecting the overall trend in the economy. Domestic turnover fell by 0.2 per cent, which meant that exports became an important mainstay again, ensuring that the industry utilised its capacity. Overall food exports rose by an estimated 1.1 per cent to 60.8 billion euros. At the same time exports to EU countries, the industry's largest export market, slowed considerably, rising by only 0.4 per cent. Brexit cast its shadow in 2018 already and exports to the UK were reduced slightly.

Chief executive of the Federation of German Food and Drink Industries (BVE) Christoph Minhoff: "The fact is that a quarter of the food industry's turnover and therefore jobs depend on exports to the EU single market. In order to secure growth opportunities and employment in the years to come we must make every effort to strengthen the model which the European Union represents and which has brought us 60 years of peace and wealth. Politics and industry must accept the challenge. We need a functioning European Union to ensure a successful future for the German food industry. It is also in the interests of the people in our country. 81 per cent of German citizens do not want to forego local products in the future.

These are the results of a survey carried out by the BVE and the startup Appino, which interviewed 1,000 people on their possible food consumption habits in the future. The survey showed that people's diets could well include new products. Thus, 58 per cent of those polled could imagine that in 10 years time they would be consuming alternative forms of protein, including plants such as algae, providing it helped the environment. 21 per cent said they would switch to in-vitro meat products for the same reason. 20 per cent approved of insects. However, 15 per cent also said they would not consider alternative proteins and instead would pay close attention to the ecological footprint of foods. 13 per cent said sustainability was no reason to change to alternative foods.

The survey also offered an interesting insight into food consumption scenarios of the future. Consumers estimated that in ten years time they would be making 48 per cent of their food purchases online. Only eight per cent of those polled thought the household kitchen would no longer be needed and that they would be eating out instead. They believed they would still prefer cooking at home. In contrast, around one-fifth of consumers (22 per cent) said they could imagine growing their own food, vegetables for instance, on the balcony or in the garden. Only 15 per cent entertained the idea of ready-made meals from a 3D printer. Men were the more adventurous of the interviewees. 20 per cent said they could imagine food being digitally produced in the future, while 23 per cent thought this scenario was out of the question.

The ongoing digital transformation also provides new opportunities for customers to find about products online. Only eight per cent said they were not interested in this option. According to the survey, where multiple choices were permitted, the main interest of consumers lay in finding out where food ingredients come from (55 per cent), how products support a healthy diet (53 per cent), their ecological footprint (44 per cent), the actual production process (40 per cent), and who produces the ingredients (37 per cent).

Employing around 595,506 people in some 6,044 businesses, the food sector is the fourth largest industry in Germany, continually supplying 82 million consumers with



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good quality food at reasonable prices. Its export ratio of 33.5 per cent is proof that customers around the world appreciate the quality of German products. Small and medium-sized enterprises dominate this sector: 90 per cent of companies in the German food industry are SMEs.