

January 17, 2019

Jari Leppä, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland Speech to be delivered at the opening of Grüne Woche on 17 January, Berlin

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests from Around the World, Grüße aus der Wildnis!

I bring you greetings from Finland – the northernmost agricultural country in the world, which right now is covered with snow and ice. Yesterday, when I started off at my home farm in Pertunmaa, the temperature was about ten below zero, and we had to plough our way through snow to the main road. This is what we do all the time in January, and this is also what our food production is adapted to. Thanks to the Golf Stream, Finland is a very unique Arctic country. Finland is the most northern country in the world where agriculture is practised as a viable industry. Our main production sectors are dairy husbandry and beef production, and more than 10 per cent of arable lands are under organic farming. However, more than 72 per cent of Finland's land area is covered with forest, which is why our country is sometimes called the land of green gold. Finland is well known for sustainable and responsible use and management of forests. Forests also provide us with fine wild berries, mushrooms and other interesting products, including sap, which our food processors use to make fantastic products. Agriculture, forestry and livelihoods associated with these are very important for us. Besides these, we have other significant livelihoods that also relate to the Arctic environment and involve interesting cultural elements, such as tourism, reindeer husbandry and fishing. Nature and wildlife, picking berries and mushrooms, and hunting are close to the heart of many Finns, also to me and my family. The very special right of public access, Everyman's Right, enables each and every one to enjoy the natural environment. Finland has excellent conditions for producing food in a way that is sustainable and responsible: the Arctic environment means clean soil and air and abundant and high-quality water resources, both in groundwater areas and in our lakes – which by the way number more than 200,000! The harsh winter conditions reduce the risk of plant diseases. On the global scale, it is also good to bear in mind the important role of well-functioning social structures that enable sustainable utilisation of natural resources. Because of the northern location, the growing season is very short in Finland. Abundant daylight, even mid-night sun, in the summer contribute to very special aromas and nutrient contents in our products. For example oats, one of our important, health-promoting export articles, benefits a great deal from the special growing conditions. Most Finnish farms are still run by families, just like mine. Every cow has a name, and within a week of its birth each calf's name is found in EU-registers. This is where the traceability of Finnish products derives from. Animal welfare is a matter of honour for us. Our pigs have tails and chickens have beaks. Our whole food chain is committed to extremely high hygiene standards and responsible production practices that are also efficiently controlled. In support of this, we have top quality research and the most advanced technologies. Antibiotics are only used to treat sick animals, not as a precaution, and we use no hormones. We are also very proud of the fact that our production is free from salmonella. The small Finnish population of about five and a half million is well educated, and we are among the world leaders in innovations, including "free from" products and functional foods, to mention just a couple. These are the ingredients of Finnish raw materials and products that meet the highest quality standards with regard to safety, nutrition, and flavours. In other words, our food has a story to tell with pride, and one you can trust. Welcome to learn more about Finnish food at our stand in Hall 10.2! Ladies and Gentlemen, To be able to feed the growing world population, food production must increase by 60 per cent to the year 2050. Both production and productivity must grow to have enough food for the vast numbers of increasingly well-to-do people. However, production must be increased in a way that provides the future generations with opportunities for good living. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are a



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comprehensive guideline on our path towards more sustainable economies. One very particular challenge is climate change and how we can mitigate its impacts and adapt to it. The food system of the future must be capable of producing safe, nutritious and tasty food in a way that is sustainable and resilient, while also maintaining a good standard health and wellbeing for farm animals. To-day, technology and digitalisation are among the key issues in creating such a system. These are also the themes to be discussed at the Global Forum on Saturday. Ladies and Gentlemen, It has become a tradition for the Grüne Woche to invite ministers of agriculture from around the world to discuss topical issues in the sector, especially such that impact on us far into the future. As the minister of a partner country, I am very happy to offer some special experiences and tell about Finland, both in official and unofficial contexts. Grüne Woche partnership gives us the opportunity to showcase Finland's image in the European market area that is so important for us, just before Finland takes over the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Finland's Presidency in the latter half of 2019 will be a very important time. Issues to be decided include the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework. From the perspective of both Finland and the EU, a successful CAP reform is vital in order to maintain, as well as further develop, our common, long-standing agricultural policy. We want to provide our farmers with certainty as to the content and funding of the new policy as soon as possible. The way I would sum up the core of the CAP reform is that the policy should be considerably simplified and it should provide incentives to produce food for us in a way that is environmentally sustainable and ensures a high standard of animal welfare. To conclude, I have certain special thanks to extend. I am very proud that the Finnish Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners took the bold step of seeking the partner country status. This is the first time when the official partner is something else than a nation. Our producer organisation has adopted a strong role in promoting the visibility of Finnish expertise and clean food. My firm belief is that this work will carry far into the future! So special thanks to the producer organisation for the good work on the partner status! I also wish to extend my thanks to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany and Minister Klöckner, Messe Berlin, and other cooperation partners for the excellent arrangements for the fair and for the opportunity to be here as a partner country. The relations between Finland and Germany are excellent, also proven by Federal President Steinmeier's official visit to Finland last year. In politics we are often on the same side: we defend a strong and unified European Union and rule-based international order. Trade between our two countries is also doing very well: year after year Germany is one of Finland's most important trading partners. By these words I, for my own part, open the Grüne Woche, and wish you all the best for the event that provides opportunities for networking, exchanging experiences and finding new kinds of partnerships. Thank you!