

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

**CSD 16
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OPENING STATEMENT

Intervention from the Farmers' Group by
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I am very happy to be here and to have the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the farmers in the world, which I represent through the International Federation of Agricultural Producers.

Springtime is the best season to be a farmer. Back home, right now, my husband and my sons are letting the cows out on the grass, sowing the fields and plan for the up coming harvest of silage. Many plans for the future and hopes for a good season lie ahead of us.

I have been farming for more than 20 years. Together with my family I am running an organic dairy farm, north of Stockholm in Sweden.

Over the years, we have been going through all kinds of changes.

Political reforms, changes in the market place, weather variability, and of course development and growth on our own farm.

Change has been a characteristic for my years as a farmer, but never at a pace are we experiencing right now. And never before, has agriculture been pointed out as the key factor for the future at the global level.

Farmers faced many challenges including: food security, the supply of biomass, being rewarded for eco system services and also responding to all the other demands linked to producing in a sustainable way e.g food safety standards, animal welfare, traceability.. .

To deliver an outcome, which will be sustainable, from a farmers perspective I believe that we need to :

1. Welcome the recent development towards stronger prices for what farmers produce,

“The best cure for high prices is high prices.

Farmers react very quickly to price signals. High prices give us incentives to produce more.

Export barriers and other trade barriers are trade distorting and in the long run , undermine increased production. Which farmer wants to remain in a business which loses profitability, putting in danger his/ her own livelihood?

Good prices and a market driven demand, are the best way to increasing agricultural production and improving the livelihood in rural areas and thus eliminating poverty.

However, farmers need to benefit from the rise in food prices through getting high enough farm gate prices. This is not always the case today as speculation and the prominence of middle men is overriding.

2. Develop strong farmers' organisations in north and in south.

Farmers' organisations have been key players in Europe, and will be the key for farmers elsewhere. Getting organised allows farmers increase their market power and market access. FOs not only help to improve the situation of the farmers in the agri-food chains by providing a range of services , but they also represent a tool for advocacy to ensure the formulation and implementation of adapted agricultural policies. For example, let me quote the example of Swedish farmers through my own organisation LRF, who raised the issue of simplification and cost reduction related to government regulations estimated at over 360 million Euros a year. LRF has invited the government to set a strategy to reduce the burden of complicated rules and regulations in agriculture and forestry. Our voice has been heard and this has become an issue in the current European Health Check.

3. Strengthen agriculture, farmers and rural areas.

We as farmers were very pleased that the WB finally recognises the important role of agriculture in development cooperation and in poverty alleviation. However, the WDR describes the Agricultural economy as a transition phase to the urban and industrial economies.

Yes, it might have been the case in the past in our countries.

However, we need to be cautious that a continuously unplanned urban growth is a threat to the maintenance of rural area. Very many of the biggest cities in the world expand on the best agricultural land . That is not sustainable. But I strongly believe we will see a paradigm shift towards a more balanced approach for rural-urban planning

I think it will be absolutely necessary to set up policies that promote rural development and agriculture, which make people stay in the country side maintaining lively and economically dynamic rural areas.

5. Call for policies and strategies, that give farmers stability, long term conditions and predictability.

The present situation marked by food supply shortages worldwide, reminds us of the reason why we have once set up the Common Agricultural Policy in Europe. The CAP was actually created to handle a situation similar to the one we are facing today, with a lot of concern about food security. The EU has shown that a modern common agricultural policy, can manage many negative externalities that the free market not will manage in an adequate way. The CAP, plays a crucial role when it comes to fulfil all necessary requirements in the fields of environmental protection, natural resource management, food safety and security, animal welfare and rural development.

The example of the CAP shows us the importance to set up modern and adequate agricultural policies worldwide as critical tools to handle all opportunities and challenges related to agricultural developments.

Decoupling of production at the EU level was set up to reduce trade distorting overproduction. However, with the current food situation, we should not bring back coupling policies as an excuse to address food insecurity.

In the current context of rising food prices, there is an obvious risk that we forget, the particular nature of agriculture as a managed ecosystem which reacts slowly to price-developments and therefore is highly vulnerable to price-volatility. But I believe the sector worldwide needs tools to manage risk, both on the market and weather levels especially in those countries where food security is an issue for small holders.

Despite problems and threats, I have a rather bright view on the future. In my organisation The Federation of Swedish Farmers, COPA/COGEA at the European level and IFAP at the international

level, we discuss all these and build policy orientations based on our concerns and experiences .

Farmers are proactive and deserve to be recognised as the key stakeholders and partners . As Mr Per Pinstrup Andersson said yesterday; agriculture is a private sector, but of concern to all of us. Don't forget, we as farmers have a lot of knowledge and experience. we can really contribute to make real changes for the development of agriculture and rural areas in a sustainable way.

Thank you for listening.