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## **Speech by Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture Julia Klöckner , Occasion: Opening of the 84th International Green Week 2019 Date: Thursday, 17 January 2019**

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Welcome to the industry where the future grows, where that which sustains life is produced. Welcome to the food and farming industry.

Over the many decades food production has changed. It has become more modern, more mechanised, more digital, more interconnected, more global and more traceable.

At the same time the demands placed on producers and production have increased. Consumers have become more critical with regard to protecting the environment, climate, resources and livestock and where consumer protection is concerned.

I say: the industry can and should be confident enough to engage in an open dialogue.

The basis for appreciating something is knowledge – knowing what a farmer's job in the stables, fields and cellars and work is about.

Never before have our farmers been so qualified. Never before have controls and measurements been so precise, has food been so thoroughly checked and of such good quality at such low prices.

This trade fair can confidently be regarded as a genuine shop window for diversity and development in this sector.

The statistics speak for themselves. The fair's attraction remains unabated. More exhibitors have come to Berlin than ever before.

I am certain that this trade fair in the capital, which attracts more consumers here than any other, will fascinate visitors of all ages this year again.



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There is one thing we all have in common: we must eat and drink. The basis for life is something we cannot take for granted.

It takes good resources and the efforts of farmers and the entire food industry to ensure our daily bread reaches the table.

For the ministry and myself these fair halls will be our offices “on tour“ for about the next ten days.

The German government and we in particular at the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture are accompanying the leading trade fair for agriculture and the food industry, including every debate on economic efficiency, expectations and viability, the future and one’s experiences.

That is why I am delighted to be here with you today in order to open this unique trade fair. Agriculture is not just any sector, but something special because it is a business that supports life. It is therefore the basis for political stability and security.

Good soil or a good piece of land is something of great value. For it is the soil and agriculture that delivers the basis for life, without which nothing else would function.

Here in Germany, in Europe, consumers are no longer so in touch with that experience.

Even in times of drought, which last year badly affected many of those present, when the barn stocks are almost depleted the supermarket shelves remain full.

In other parts of the world the story is different. When there is no harvest people go hungry. And hungry people fight to survive. We all know that starvation brings no peace of mind.

Without a functioning farming sector that delivers food there can be no stability, in fact no peaceful co-existence.

Even if we take it for granted, and particularly in these times, one cannot underestimate the value of a farming industry where farmers are too often blamed for everything: climate change, mass insect loss, food scandals and improper livestock maintenance.

These are times in which it is also tempting to play these things down with a knee-jerk response as simply irrational attacks.

The food and farming industry have changed. We are increasingly aware of the need for new arable farming and livestock maintenance strategies in order to sustain our life-supporting resources.

Consumers need agriculture and farmers need their customers. Let us paint a realistic picture.

Farming still conjures up romantic images. For many it represents something they secretly long for. In an age in which we are impressed by driverless trucks and the latest technology people imagine the farmer's wife cheerfully going about her business with a wooden urn. An idyllic world – but one where expectations could not be higher.

What do you imagine, what do I imagine when thinking of what farming will be like in 2030?

Naturally, I imagine food and enjoyment, a responsible attitude towards livestock and the environment, nature and thriving rural communities, a place where one feels at home. But with advanced hi-tech equipment in the fields, stables and sheds that will make farming lives easier.

Robots will be taken for granted everywhere in the fields, data will make its way directly from the field to the cloud, onto the supermarket shelf and all the way to the consumer's plate.

Modern farming units will use precision farming methods to minimise pesticide use, with machinery that can pinpoint crop and pest occurrence and deliver exact amounts of pesticide and fertiliser without any loss.

That is not too far removed from the present day. Already, we have cowsheds where milking is digitally automated, livestock health is assessed and farmers receive the information by smartphone. To achieve this we need blanket high-speed internet coverage – digital highways, not dirt tracks! This is vital for a business location. Because yesterday's milk urn is today's robotic milking machine.

I am delighted that some 70 colleagues from all over the world have accepted my invitation to attend the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, the 'Davos of agriculture', at the International Green Week.

On the weekend, together with the federal chancellor, we will be discussing the paths digitalisation should take in the food and farming industry and will coordinate our views with our colleagues from around the world. The topics will be data issues, standards and data interfaces.

Naturally, farmers will also be wondering who is in charge of the data from their tractors and fields – is it the state or a manufacturer? That is something we need to examine and ideally rule on together.

Modern, digitalised agriculture is a worldwide opportunity to ensure more efficient, energy-saving production and give more people enough food. That is a good prospect for the countries in question and a factor in helping to stem mass migration.

By 2050 the world's population will have risen to ten billion. Currently, 821 million people live in starvation on this planet. Two million people are undernourished. That is shameful.

We will undoubtedly not be able to ensure people's right to food and nutrition by partially giving up agriculture. The key to ensuring global food security lies with efficient, sustainable farming that is adapted to local needs, and with developing economically efficient rural areas.

The Green Week is where we can promote agriculture and explain what it is about. We can seek to engage in a dialogue. But we can also listen, because this is where agriculture meets society, with over 400,000 visitors.

To the representatives of the farming sector I say: let us not forego this opportunity. Let us say what we must – openly and intelligently – and without adorning the facts.

And let us help to ensure public discussion has more to do with actual issues and scientific facts and less with partisanship and imagery that is black and white. Let us confront simplistic attitudes where there is only "good" or "bad".

This is not about being "eco" versus "conventional", but about moving forward together for the common good and for the sake of future generations. Only together do we represent agriculture, whether we be small or large, "eco" or "conventional", along with all the opportunities and challenges that that entails.

And let us openly address the conflicts that exist – to be able to secure the harvest and store good vegetables and fruit one must nurture healthy crops and be open to new developments and not be immune to scientific progress. And with a view to those who are living and starving in the world where agriculture is at a disadvantage.

Let us also emphasise that agriculture is also a business and must be successful if we are to keep the younger generation on board. This is also, but not only, about maintaining the land.

Let us show that we represent agriculture in motion, agriculture for the future. And let us seek that which brings us together and not that which divides us.

Particularly in these times in which we live, as in the UK which is struggling with Brexit.

I regret the result of the recent referendum. The citizens and governments of EU 27 do not want a hard Brexit. But time is running out. Whatever happens, we need clarity before the European elections at the end of May.

We are ready to help and work on ensuring the UK remains an integral part of Europe. But European cohesion has priority, along with developing the European project, the integrity of the single market and peace in Northern Ireland.

Here too, it should be noted that trading with one another also means remaining open to the other's views. That "other" company wants to be successful on the markets and engages with other another country and its people, and understands how other countries work. And that is the opposite of isolationism and nationalism. We can only move forward together. The diversity we are witnessing at the Green Week is a gift – each has its own value, for that is what home tastes like.

I wish you all enjoyment, an educational experience, and a successful and entertaining Green Week 2019.