

Innovation Welcoming

Opening Statement - Thierry de l'Escaille

Brussels Press Club Europe – 1 December 2015

Ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests,

Thank you so much for agreeing to be here with us this afternoon, particularly given the security circumstances, the rainy weather and your very full agendas.

It is a pleasure to be here to discuss such an urgent topic. As you know, we are very close to another important event today: the Commission's Agricultural Outlook conference. Both over there and right here, we will highlight the challenge of agriculture: providing food in an environmentally sustainable way while we mitigate the damage of climate change.

We all know that Europe and the world are not close to solving the problem of having both innovative and plentiful agriculture as well as the best standards for environmental protection.

Globally, we are seeing a digital revolution in agriculture. Our farms and machines are becoming more and more connected, creating efficiency and reducing environmental impact. I am sure that **Deutz-Fahr** and **Frits van Evert** will be happy to give us examples.

Just like taxi services and hotels, agriculture is going through a transformation period: the “Agriculture 3.0 generation”. This goes far beyond the farm gate: all our inputs, sales, distribution and even consumption – these will all need to change. What we need are new ways of working together, and of using this new digital world to communicate with our customers and suppliers. I am therefore happy to have an ELO member and forward-looking farmer here. **Rudolf**, I am sure your estate in Sweden can give us many useful examples.

What we cannot lose sight of is the duty we all have, and especially for land managers; the protection of our biodiversity and natural resources. How will the Agriculture 3.0 generation produce better outcomes for environment? For this, we have asked **Walter Haefeker** to give his insights.

However, in this new technological world we still need to better connect the reality on the farm with public perception. This means not just farmers, but regulators too and I am therefore looking forward to hearing from **Ana Cuadadro Galvin's** presentation to hear about DG AGRI's digital efforts.

There is one additional item that I would like to discuss in this event, which is something that we maybe are not supposed to talk about. I am referring to money. How will we ensure that all this new technology is available to farmers, many of whom are already investing and do not always have the resources to pay for the latest everything. This is true here in Belgium, but a small family farm in Romania, for example, will struggle even more.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We need innovation. By this we mean not just the high-tech miracles of the internet age. To find the solutions, or even the right balance,

between production and protection we will need to find new and old ways of doing business.

But where is then space for regulation? How do we associate competitiveness and the “culture of entrepreneurship” to the overall development of the agricultural sector?

Before passing the word to our honourable keynote speaker, I would like **to thank our partners and sponsors** without whom it would be hard to organise this event today. They are all directly involved in today’s discussion and we look very much forward to hear from you this afternoon.

I am happy to introduce **Achim Dobermann**, Director from Rothamsted Research Institute in the UK, who will give us a introduction to the trends in agriculture and the role of technology for tomorrow’s food production.

Achim, the floor is yours.