

Keynote speech

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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.

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.

It's much easier to talk about the past and about the present, but I would like to focus on the future of which we now very little about.

But we do know, that times are a- changing as Bob Dylan sang back in the 60's. And things are changing very rapidly

All these changes are affecting agriculture and farming, one way or the other.

Climate change and global warming

Food/versus bio energy

Water flooding/scarcity, draught

Environmentally sustainable systems

Biodiversity

Diseases

Just to mention a few of them.

As farmers, we are the first to notice and have to deal with the new situation in our daily work. Many of us has already been affected, or benefited from these changes.

CAP is the instrument for European society to give guidance and directions to farmers to make sure we are meeting the expectations from the tax payers

Over the years the CAP has changed from production subsidies and coupled payments into decoupled payments, payments for animal welfare, environment, biodiversity, rural development etc.

2007 was a historical year for many of us. For the first time, at least in my time as a farmer, we had a market situation where there were no longer any storages, no overproduction and a fantastic rise in market prices. The biggest ones in history?

What kind of consequences will this new situation bring to us? To farmers, to consumers, to societies, to governments? What kind of action will be necessary to take? What kinds of responsibilities can we foresee, what kind of threats?

Over the years, I have tried to adapt my farming according to the market situation and the CAP. Even though I strongly welcome a market situation with a functioning demand and supply system, I am convinced there will still be a need for strong common agricultural policy. But perhaps also to be extended into a more global context.

Agriculture and farming will play an enormously important role in the future. Agriculture will be part of the solution of many of these global problems, not as some still believe, part of the problems.

I just want to point out a few things I believe is of importance to strengthen agriculture and farmers to make us be able to deliver an outcome which will be sustainable, economically, socially and environmentally.

1. Agriculture is a long term biologic production. Therefore we need policies and strategies that give us stability, long term conditions and predictability. We need transparent rules and regulations and there is a

need for simplification when it comes to administration and bureaucracy.

In many countries access to land is an important issue for small and medium sized farms. In times of rising prices and an increasing profitability there is a obvious risk for small farmers to be ruled out of business by big commercial or governmental interests.

2. Risk management tools and safety nets. To secure the production of food, services and all other commodities from the agricultural sector. To ensure farmers will stay in business in a long term perspective.
3. Strong farmers' organisations in north and in south. Developing cooperation and strengthening farmers in the market place. Providing extension services improve quality and efficiency in the production, especially in developing countries to strengthen competitiveness in all markets.
4. We need a strong market demand. In the long term, good prices and a market driven demand is the best way of improving the livelihood in rural areas and reducing poverty.

For the rural development, good prices and a strong demand is essential. Being a farmer, I was very happy and pleased that WB emphasizes the importance of agriculture in development cooperation and in reducing poverty.

But WDR describes the Agricultural economy as a transition phase into the urban and industrial economies. Yes, it might have been the fact in the past. But I strongly believe we will see a paradigm shift. I think it will be absolutely necessary to manage to develop rural areas, to make people stay in the country side, to develop enterprises and local societies to achieve environmental, social and economically sustainable systems.

The urban growth is a threat in many perspectives. Very many of the biggest cities in the world expands on the best agricultural land there is available. Land protection will be very important in future.

5. Knowledge, education and research. We are facing probably the biggest challenges in mankind. Living in Europe I have access to information, knowledge and research. Still I feel I have a feeling of not being aware of what's going on.

My colleagues in very many developing countries are much less fortunate and are lacking awareness of this new situation and how it will affect them. Therefore a lot of efforts must be made to give them a chance to catch up. I am convinced we all need more awareness and knowledge and collaboration in a global context. Without awareness and knowledge it is difficult to make the right decisions. And we cannot afford to make the wrong ones.

Despite problems and threats, I have a rather bright view on the future. In my organisation The Federation of Swedish Farmers, COPA/COGEA in the European level and IFAP on the international level, we discuss all this issues and we work together in policy and strategy work, exchanging experiences and knowledge. But it is just as important to discuss with others, like here today. So, I am looking forward to this afternoon and to the discussion with you all.

Thank you.