

Speech
by the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Areas
of the State of Schleswig-Holstein
Dr. Juliane Rumpf
on the occasion of the expert discussion

**"Reduction of greenhouse gases in agriculture -
taking Schleswig-Holstein as an example for proposals for
implementation of the CAP reform"**

Ladies and gentlemen, members of
parliament, Mrs Rodust and Mr Böge,
Professor Taube and Professor Joosten,
Mrs Loriz-Hoffmann.

The general conditions for agriculture
have changed considerably both globally
and regionally over the past few years.
Examples of some of the major trends can
be briefly highlighted:

- Growth of the world population and
demographic change;
- Increased demand for food;

- Changes in living and consumption patterns, especially in threshold countries such as China and India;
- Increased production of bio-energy as a result of climate change;
- Competition for use of agricultural area, in the sense of competition between the production of food, fodder and fuel and
- Climate change and climate protection.

These trends will result in changes to the type and intensity of agricultural production.

The topic of "climate change and protection" is one of the prominent political areas which have a considerable impact on agriculture – in two respects: agriculture is both a causative factor and a victim.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased that you have accepted my invitation to the Hanse-Office to discuss the aspects which agriculture can and must contribute to the protection of our climate.

Welcome.

Ladies and gentlemen,
before we begin an intensive exchange of ideas, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Joosten and Prof. Dr. Taube for presenting selected results from their many years of research.

I hope that the statements which will be made here today will be taken into consideration in the further discussions on common agricultural policy after 2013. When they are implemented at a later date, they should contribute to the improvement of the climate balance of our farms.

I would also like to thank Mrs Loriz-Hoffmann, who will present the decisions in the field of agriculture and climate protection in the context of the CAP reforms from the point of view of the European Commission.

This event can only be a first step. In addition to the initial measures which must now be specified in detail, further research

is required in order to reduce emissions more efficiently.

Ladies and gentlemen,
the objectives of climate policy outlined by both the EU and Germany are, in my opinion, both ambitious and achievable.

Agriculture will also have to make a contribution to the achievement of the most important goal of climate policy, namely limitation of the increase of the average global temperature to 2 degrees Celsius.

Milestones for climate protection are the 20-20-20 initiative of the EU and also the roadmap for a low carbon economy by 2050 with targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases by 80 percent and more. The government of the state of Schleswig-Holstein welcomes these targets. We also support the idea of a long-term target system up to 2050.

Ladies and gentlemen,
as a result of climate change, agriculture is forced on the one hand to adjust its production methods to the changes in general conditions. This is accompanied by considerable investments.

In Northern Germany the key features of these changes are spring droughts and especially heavy rain in summer. Here we can obtain an impression of the efforts which will need to be made in agriculture in coming years in order to continue to produce a large, high quality harvest.

On the other hand, the wide range of agricultural production methods also produces considerable amount of greenhouse gases.

Depending on the calculation method, around 6 – 13 percent of annual greenhouse gas emissions in Germany are due to agriculture. This is equivalent to approximately 125 million tons of CO₂ annually. The following lectures will explain the details of the calculations.

Taking the example of Schleswig-Holstein, the "hot spots" of greenhouse gas emissions due to agriculture result from livestock farming as well as the agricultural use of peatland and utilisation of nitrogen fertilizer which is not always in keeping with the requirements of the location.

At this point it must also be mentioned that in the context of production of bio-mass for energy purposes, agriculture is also making a positive contribution to preventing greenhouse gas emissions. This demonstrates that agriculture does not just produce emissions which are harmful to our climate, but also makes a contribution to avoiding and preventing them, which can be extended even further.

Due to its natural soil and climate conditions, Schleswig-Holstein is one of the most productive agricultural regions in the European Union. Harvests of over 10 tons/hectare for wheat and over 5 tons/hectare for rape seed are achieved not only in trial areas but also in practice.

However, from my point of view it is not this high level of productivity but rather to some extent inefficient management which opposes effective climate protection. Therefore, the yardstick should primarily be the efficiency of production, for example the parameter of the "carbon footprint".

Ladies and gentlemen,
for the evaluation of greenhouse gas emissions, it is necessary to differentiate between unavoidable and avoidable factors, because farms cannot have an influence on all the factors. Hence, the methane emissions from livestock digestion can only be reduced to a limited extent.

All branches of production along the entire process chain must be evaluated. My aim is not to discredit foods of animal origin due to their higher emissions in comparison with vegetable foods. Rather, the production processes in all sub-systems must be optimized and measures for the reduction of greenhouse gases must be identified.

Measured against the base year of 1990, agriculture has already achieved several successes in its efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. However, here too: "Only the best is good enough".

We ought to set ourselves ambitious targets in order to achieve high yields per

unit area without neglecting the protection of the soil, water, climate, air and nature.

Ladies and gentlemen,
with the pending new alignment of the CAP and increased consideration of environmental issues, conditions are ideal for improving the climate balance of agriculture through efficient measures. This is why we have invited you to this expert discussion now.

I still consider the approach of the EU Commission as well as the EU Parliament, to combine direct payments of the first pillar with measures beneficial for the environment and the retention of the two-pillar structure to be correct and a step in the right direction.

In my opinion, future subsidies should have the objective of achieving the greatest possible synergies for the protection of our climate, water, soil and nature. However, at the same time we must examine and assess all measures for the protection of water, soil and nature with regard to their effect on greenhouse gases.

Against the background of the synergy effects which are to be achieved, a point of view which considers the various sectors separately should now be a thing of the past.

Ladies and gentlemen,
from the point of view of Schleswig-Holstein, measures which aim to create synergies are especially important.

- The agricultural use of peatland must be stated here. This is approximately 10% of the usable agricultural area of Schleswig-Holstein. According to estimates by our Statistics Agency approximately 2.3 million tons of greenhouse gasses calculated as CO₂ equivalents escape from our degraded and drained bog and fen each year. These emissions will increase with increasing drainage and use as arable land. On the other hand, the peatland will become CO₂ sinks if the water levels are increased and they are used as grassland. This is the reason that we have also created a peatland protection programme.

- The optimisation of fertilizer management is also of great importance for the avoidance of emission of greenhouse gases. Both improved use of farm-produced fertilizer in livestock farms as well as optimisation of the use of mineral nitrogen in arable farming must be mentioned at this point.
- Recent results from Austria indicate that gas-proof covering of slurry tanks is an important factor for reducing the emission of greenhouse gases.
- In addition, a climate and energy check of farms may prove to be an effective means of climate protection. In the context of such measures, farmers must commit to accept certain advisory offers in order to achieve the specified targets. The creation of short-rotation plantations and woodland in suitable locations also appears to be of interest.

Ladies and gentlemen,
as you can see, there are many open questions in the field of climate protection and agriculture which need to be taken up and discussed in detail. One thing is already clear to me: agriculture and forestry will play a key role in taking on the global challenge of climate protection. Thank you for your attention. I look forward to the lectures and a lively discussion.