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IFAJ Congress 2024

Speaking Notes
for
Federal Councillor
Guy Parmelin,
Swiss Minister of Agriculture

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education
and Research (EAER)

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Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here, below the majestic peaks of the Bernese Alps, for this congress of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists.

Over the next four days, you will have the opportunity to discover Swiss agriculture in all its diversity.

Despite its modest size, Switzerland is home to almost every form of agriculture: from industrial farming on the plains, rearing livestock and producing cereal crops, fruit and vegetables, to mountain pastures and family-run farms.

Thanks to using new technologies and to breeding livestock adapted to the different topographical and climatic conditions of our country, Swiss agriculture has proven to be highly resilient.

And thanks to cutting-edge agricultural research at Agroscope, the Swiss federal centre of excellence for agronomic research, and at the Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich and Lausanne, Swiss agriculture is always ready to take on new challenges.

Over the next few days, you'll be visiting Switzerland. From the Bernese Oberland, where we are today, to Central Switzerland, via Valais and Eastern Switzerland, you'll see some magnificent landscapes.

Don't forget that it's partly thanks to the work of our farmers that they are so beautiful.

Whether as tourists or locals, we all enjoy spending time in this dazzling natural environment, but we mustn't forget that without agriculture, Switzerland would not be what it is today.

While shaping mountain landscapes is a uniquely Swiss activity, we are not isolated from the changes that lie ahead.

In agriculture, technological advances and digitalisation offer exciting prospects, but we will also have to meet the challenges of climate change and demographic growth.

What's more, consumers' expectations of agriculture are increasingly high, and the industry needs to keep pace with changing attitudes and markets.

Switzerland's agricultural policy in the coming years must therefore provide our farmers with the tools that they need to continue to maintain sustainable production, while at the same time strengthening the farming community's ability to meet the challenges of our time. It is vitally important that all stakeholders work together if we are to ensure food security.

Farmers, producers, distributors, intermediaries, suppliers and consumers are all affected.

Unless we all meet the challenges ahead, we will not be able to have a sustainable and resilient farming industry. Not here, not anywhere.

Ladies and gentlemen, just like the four Austro-German climbers who were the first to climb the North Face of the Eiger in 1938, we need to work as a team, collaborating and finding solutions together in difficult times if we are to scale the hardest summits. The higher they are, the higher the expectations.

I hope you enjoy your time here in Switzerland, and I encourage you to ask questions of the experts you will meet during the congress. I'm sure you'll be surprised by the many facets of Swiss agriculture. I'm delighted to see you here and wish you a wonderful stay in Switzerland.