

WELCOME ADDRESS OF DR. P. BRELOH

**Head of the Directorate-General for Forestry, Hunting, Research and Development
Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry
Bonn, Germany**

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Federal Government and particularly on behalf of the federal minister of food, agriculture and forestry Mr. Borchert I would like to cordially welcome you to Berlin and to wish your symposium every success.

The topics which will be dealt with in the symposium in the course of the next few days are of importance in terms of agricultural as well as forestry policy. They include the issue of sensible land use, i.e. real agricultural and forestry opportunities under today's conditions and the question of how to achieve increased CO₂ sequestration in order to counteract the trend towards climate change.

Since the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 the Federal Government has repeatedly stated that it accords great importance to the subject "forests and climate". This is also made in the now available "National Forest Report", the report of the Federal Republic of Germany on management, conservation and sustainable development of forests in Germany.

The aim of a systematic increase of forested area throughout Germany by means of increased afforestation of agricultural land which has been set aside is understandable in view of the multiple functions of forests in an industrial society. Forests guarantee the natural bases of life, serve as recreation for the population, provide valuable raw materials and are a source of income in forestry and timber industries.

The considerable increase in agricultural production in the European Union, with growth rates of 2 - 3 % per year, is faced with stagnant or declining consumption. Adjustment of production in line with sales potential demands that land use be extensified and that some land be permanently removed from agricultural use.

In view of this development it is appropriate to consider where cultivated land should be set aside and how it can be used for the purposes of forestry. Furthermore, it is not sufficient to envisage only marginal soils for this. Agricultural production must also be sopped on some of the more favoured sites.

Agricultural forestry as a combined form of land use is one conceivable option. We in Germany have learned from our forest history that the use of existing forests for agricultural purposes, for example for forest pasture or utilisation of litter, can also cause sustained negative effects for forest ecosystems and their ability to regenerate. These still affect the forest industry today. The aim is therefore rather a separation of forestry and agricultural use in the existing forests. In principle, however, coppices also offer a variety of possible uses outside the forests which have certainly not yet been exhausted. Some examples are the planting of trees outside the forest, windbreaks, the planting of fruit-bearing trees, for example the walnut or short-rotation plantations which are harvested by agricultural means.

In this situation of land surplus it is meritorious to discuss new strategies of land use. It is a reasonable approach to evaluate the present knowledge and to define the status quo of research and further research needs at the very beginning. Research in many cases is the basis or the starting point for innovation which often proves to be a helpful instrument to overcome economic problems.

The last step on the way to new production methods is to spread the existing knowledge among farmers and decision makers.