

**Speech at the European Commission's
50 year anniversary of the Common Agricultural Policy
23rd January 2012**

Dear Presidents, dear Commissioners, dear members of Parliament and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen!

It is an honor to be here today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Common Agricultural Policy.

As we stand here in the Berlaymont building at the heart of EU Brussels with the European Parliament and the Council as close neighbors, we should remember that the Common Agricultural Policy has been at the heart of the European Union almost since its beginning.

The Common Agricultural Policy is about issues that affect all of us: It is about our food, employment and the economic growth of the European Union – from the olive farmers of the Mediterranean over the cornfields of central Europe to the dairies in the North.

What we decide in the common policy affects our health, the environment, nature, climate and the welfare of our animals.

I was six years old, when Denmark had a referendum and joined the European Union in 1972. I remember it vividly. The CAP was an important incentive for Danes to vote yes.

To me personally it seems that the CAP has been part of my life always. Growing up on a farm, studying to be an agronomist, working in the Ministry for Food and now as a minister during the Danish Presidency.

To begin with – 50 years ago – when it was launched, the common goal was to avoid food shortages and to ensure stable and reasonable prices.

We accomplished that.

I think it is fair to say that the Common Agricultural Policy with its common market and the flow of agricultural goods across borders - was a frontrunner for the single

market – years before the single market came to life. That was a second great accomplishment.

The Common Agricultural Policy has developed over the years - not only in terms of production of food – but also with regard to our responsibility for nature and the environment.

In these days we are preparing a new chapter in the history of the common policy. A greener chapter! The modernisation of the CAP has already meant an increase in the emphasis on environmental aspects, climate, development, jobs, food safety and animal welfare. The policy must continue to develop in this direction.

And I do believe it has a green future! In fact I believe that agriculture in many ways stands at the centre of Europe's greener and more prosperous future.

The Common Agricultural Policy has a potential for promoting green growth. It has the potential to ensure the production of high quality agricultural products without jeopardizing our nature.

The Common Agricultural Policy must be part of the solution to the economic challenges Europe is facing today.

We must prioritize innovation and research in green technology. We must aim to once again to make agriculture the frontrunner for European growth.

Sometime in the future, I hope we can look back to this day – not only as a celebration – but also as a time where the foundations for a new Common Agricultural Policy were laid down.

Dear commissioners and colleagues –

I would like to thank you for organizing this event. I look very much forward to working with all of you during the next 5 months – and I would like to end today by wishing the CAP a happy birthday!