

Speech given by Gaute Homb Lenvik, Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, May 15, 2007 in Minneapolis

Dear all,

A vibrant and sustainable countryside is a main target for Norwegian agricultural policy, in addition to food production which is environmentally safe and sustainable.

Agriculture has a particular role to play in both maintaining the possibility of making a living in farming and developing the countryside. The future for agriculture includes trends as tourism, Green Care, bio-energy as well as biotechnology. Development in agriculture represents a future-oriented country development.

Within this context, research and research based innovation become major tools for reaching the main political goal for the sector – as we were told yesterday when Smaby turned his pyramid upside down.

This winter, The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food launched a new strategy for research and researched based innovation. This strategy is designed in close cooperation with the private sector, the industry, universities and research institutes. And with the same approach as the collaboration between you two universities, a main target for the strategy is to give priority to research on areas which have high relevance for the private sector.

The research policy then becomes an instrument for increased competitiveness and establishment for new ventures through transfer of technology and knowledge within the agriculture- and food sector. As means to accomplish this goal, the research policy will then give priority to improve the conditions for those researchers and research institutions that are willing and able to commercialize research results.

One of the major challenges will be to improve research communication, so that results and findings can easier be understood, interpreted, and then be used by industrial partners to bring new research-based products and services to the market.

Closely related to this, our Minister of Agriculture and Food, Mr. Terje Riis-Johansen was very impressed when he came back from his visit to Minnesota last autumn, after you had showed him how research is a superior tool to achieve political goals.

And this brings us over to the main subjects for this collaboration between UMN and UMB.

The collaboration is established to provide high quality research that also has high priority on the political arena. The topics and the research teams are offering this, and this is probably a good strategy to reach the goals:

- high quality research in central teams,
- where the needs for the results are clear.

There is also another issue that has to be mentioned. In the further development of this collaboration we have to look more into how to improve the contribution from industrial partners within the research teams.

With this I want to say thank you for the very good hospitality to our friends at Minnesota University.