

SECOND SESSION

**Vision 2030: Safeguarding our Environment,
Seas and Oceans for Future Generations**



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Honored delegates,

The **Åland** Island is located in the middle of the Baltic Sea, it is surrounded by the ocean. It is very important in all our industries to think about how we can protect the environment, seas and oceans for the future. During the summer, when the weather is hot, we can find blue-green algae along the beaches here. A sign of eutrophication. How we all can work together with these environmental challenges is a very important subject to focus on.

I have been working with agriculture and rural development here in **Åland** and therefore today I chose to focus on sustainability agriculture. For **Åland**, the food industry is significant. Of our total 30,000 inhabitants, about 600 are farmers. We have a rich agricultural landscape and a well-developed food industry and small-scale production. Therefore, I also think **Åland** could be a good place for pilot projects in sustainability food production. Already today, several projects are on the run with a focus on circular systems, construction of wetlands, sedimentation basins and IPM (integrated pest management). I want to give you some concrete examples:

A large amount of the substances that cause eutrophication are transported along the ditches to the Baltic Sea. Farmers on **Åland** have therefore in recent years built several wetlands and sedimentation basins with the main purpose of capturing nutrients from fields before they flow into the sea. The wetlands reduce the amount of nutrients that are stream out from the fields and at the same time they store water until dry years. The wetlands also beautify the landscape and serve as excellent habitats for many different species. The sedimentation basins capture soil material containing nutrients that are released from the fields. The soil material sinks to the bottom of the basin instead of traveling further in the ditches out into the Baltic Sea.

Some of our farmers have also tried to recycle nutrients from the Baltic Sea by collecting bladderwrack that is washed up on the beaches. The bladderwrack acts as a good means of soil improvement and provides an environmentally friendly nutrient supplement to the fields.

Many of our growers also work according to something we called Integrated Pest Management. In the fight against pests and diseases, we apply preventive measures. For example, we use something we call Pheromone trap. The traps hang under the summer season in the apple gardens around the Island (around 50-60 gardens). With a pheromone (odorants) they attract different insects. The traps are checked two times in the week under the growing season. Reports are then based on catches of pests. The reports give us an indication if the trees must be sprayed or not and an individual assessment is made for each apple garden. With this kind of method, the use of plant protection in apples gardens around the island reduces.

We produce around 80 % of the total production of apples in Finland here in **Åland**, and the value for the production is high. The insects are our most important workers in the cultivations of apples. A keyfactor for a good harvest is a successful pollination of the appleflowers in

connection with bumblebees and bees. Varroa is a common disease in bees, caused by Varroa-mite. The mite has caused large loss of important bees in Europe and the USA. Europe has calculated a lack of 1 million colonies much due to the Varroa mite. Varroa spread through the movement of bee fry and direct contact between infested bees. **Åland** is unique in that the bees are Varroa free, it means our bees do not suffer from the disease. To keep **Åland** free from Varroa, from 2013 we start a total stop to importing bees. That is now a reason that we have a prosperous society of bees and today the beekeepers see a possibility to trade commercially with bees to other countries. For example, we have delivered bees from **Åland** to Iceland.

The **Åland** family farms are generally small-scale and take great care of the environment. Behind each product, there are people who want to produce the best food as possible and contribute to sustainable food production. Biodiversity and climate-smart farming methods are the key elements in sustainable food production. I really look forward to further discussions with the working group on Biodiversity and I am sure that we have a lot of good ideas and experiences to exchange. Biodiversity is an extremely important subject globally as well as locally and together we still have a lot of work to do.

Thank you.