

**SPEECH BY JANUSZ WOJCIECHOWSKI,
THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMISSIONER
FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my gratitude for being invited to the conference and celebrations to mark the 70th anniversary of the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics. I very much regret that I cannot be with you personally today. My duties in the European Commission make this impossible.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you very warmly on this beautiful anniversary and, secondly, thank you for the great achievements of the Institute in those 70 years. The Institute's genesis is even several dozen years longer. 30 of these 70 years that we are recalling today during this jubilee had also been an important experience for me personally. Over the years, I have used and continue to use your scientific studies, expert opinions, and analyses very often. This work proved necessary for me when I was the President of the Supreme Audit Office, when I worked for the Polish Parliament, but it is especially useful for my work now in the European institutions. I used them first as a Member and Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, then at the European Court of Auditors, where I also dealt with agricultural controls, and finally, now that I have been the European Union Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development for a year.

Today, agriculture is an area which is particularly strongly based on knowledge, but also everything which happens around agriculture and the shaping of agricultural policy require a reliable scientific basis. I sometimes observe that certain myths and stereotypes are growing around agriculture, and only reliable knowledge based on scientific research can correct these untrue notions of what is happening in agriculture and can influence the shaping of a proper agricultural policy.

Both European and Polish agriculture, like the rest of the economy, have gone through an ordeal over recent months. The crisis caused by the pandemic has become a great test for the entire economy, including agriculture and the food industry. Fortunately, our agriculture, both European and Polish, is passing the test very well at this very difficult time. We have food security, both in Europe and in Poland. There was no shortage of food anywhere at this difficult time, and this is a great success.

I think that one of the reasons behind the success was scientific research, which has directed agriculture in such a way that it can cope with such a difficult situation.

On the other hand, however, there are also certain threats. Some sectors of agriculture and the food economy – strong, sometimes very productive and very efficient – are proving less resistant to crises than it could have been expected. These sectors are too dependent on external supplies, external markets, or external labour. These are problems that must be taken into account in the planning and programming of agricultural policy in the future. I know that you are working on a multiannual research programme regarding the future of agriculture in Europe and Poland after 2020. This research is very valuable, especially for me. I am very interested in the results of that study and I will most certainly take them into account in my work. The European Union intends to support scientific research significantly by increasing the EU funds allocated for this purpose. I firmly believe that the Institute will also participate in research programmes financed by the European Union, which are very much needed by our farmers and our economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, the primary function of agriculture is to ensure food security and, of course, it is the farmers who provide this security, but for them to be able to provide it, economic security is absolutely necessary. I would like to wish us all that together – as this is, after all, our joint task – you on the research side, and political institutions such as the European Commission on the political side – we will ensure economic security for our farmers in order to ensure that the whole society can have food security. I wish you fruitful work and congratulate you once again on this beautiful anniversary!

*Janusz Wojciechowski,
European Union Commissioner
for Agriculture and Rural Development*