Draft Speech

Sarah Schweizer, the State Secretary

on the occasion of the World Food Day Conference / DEAB Herbstkonferenz on October 16, 2026, at Schloss Hohenheim, University of Hohenheim

Check against delivery. The spoken word prevails.

I. Salutation

Dear Professor Kulia Fritz-Steuber,
(President of the University of Hohenheim)

Dear Ms. Herbold,
(Policy Officer at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ))

Dear Professor Birner,
(University of Hohenheim)

Dear Ms. Rau,
(President of the LandFrauenverband Württemberg-Baden e. V.)

Dear Dr. Guntsetseg, dear Ms. Radeke,
(Co-Executive Directors of DEAB e. V.)

Dear Mr. Bachhofer,
(Executive Director of BUND Baden-Württemberg)

Dear Ms. Braun, Member of the State Parliament (Greens),
Dear Dr. Schütte (CDU) and Mr. Nüssle (Greens), Members of the State Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I. Introduction

Welcome to today's Fall Conference, "Think Globally, Graze Locally: For the Climate, Food and Strong Women Farmers," here at Schloss Hohenheim. I would like to extend warm greetings to all of you from Minister President Özdemir and Minister Gentges.

The title of this event shows very clearly how important regional roots are, especially in a globalized world. I grew up on a farm myself and graduated from a high school specializing in nutrition science, so the topics of your conference are very close to my heart. I am all the more pleased that I can now support this work from the political side as well.

The issue of food is a top priority for us as the state government. In the coalition agreement, we agreed to anchor food sovereignty in the state constitution as a state objective. In doing so, we are building on the internationally recognized right to food. This strengthens the right to self-determined, sustainable and fair food production in our state. We also want agriculture

and nature conservation to work more closely together, in line with the principle of “Protect it by Using it.”

I hope we will soon see the effects of this approach on the ground.

II. The Importance of Grasslands and Pastures

The United Nations has declared 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, and today’s event focuses on this topic as well.

Grassland has always been very important in Baden-Württemberg, not least as the economic basis for farmers who keep cattle, horses, sheep and goats. Pastures account for about 12 percent of the agricultural land in Baden-Württemberg. That is almost one third of the state’s grassland.

Grazing is becoming more and more important in dairy farming, especially on organic farms. The European Commission has made this clear, at the very latest, through its pilot procedure against Germany, under which herbivores must now have consistent access to pasture during the grazing season from April through October, starting in 2025.

At the same time, providing pasture access can be challenging for individual organic farms, depending on their situation and the land available to them.

One thing is clear: grazing is a central element of organic farming for herbivores, and it is also becoming increasingly important for conventional farms.

III. Support

Grazing systems can be very cost-effective, but we do not have “Irish conditions” in Baden-Württemberg. The cost of producing winter feed, fragmented plots of land and, in some areas, less favorable growing and climate conditions put a strain on our grazing livestock farms.

One thing is clear: at the end of the day, the extra costs our farmers face must be compensated.

That is why the state supports the grazing of dairy cows and female cattle through a summer grazing premium, as well as through other measures in the agri-environmental program and under the Landscape Conservation Directive.

In the coalition agreement, we also agreed that funding should prioritize extensive grassland and pasture-based livestock farming. We will bring this to the table in the negotiations on the Common Agricultural Policy after 2027.

Last but not least, our farms need sound expert advice. That is why the state offers publicly funded advisory modules on cattle, sheep and goat farming, as well as on biodiversity and climate protection. In our advisory work, grassland is not seen merely as a source of feed.

Grassland is much more than that: it stands for animal welfare, biodiversity, landscape and a sense of home!

IV. The Challenge of Climate Change

This year's drought has once again brought climate change to the forefront, and not only in our advisory work. No other sector of our economy is as directly affected as our farmers.

This year, the situation is particularly tense because of the long drought combined with very high temperatures at times. Across the state, meadows and pastures have dried up, and hardly anything is growing back on the grassland.

This also shows how vulnerable pasture-based farming is, especially when winter feed reserves were calculated tightly and some of them had to be used during the grazing season itself.

As a state, we are doing everything we can to support our livestock farmers in this difficult time. Set-aside farmland under agricultural support programs can be used for forage production, as can areas originally intended for green cover under the FAKT program. In addition, the state is providing up to 5 million euros in aid to particularly affected farms that have to buy additional roughage.

This shows that farms need to build up reserves consistently when feed is available, so that they can remain self-sufficient for as long as possible when feed is scarce.

Let me also briefly address the debate on agriculture's carbon footprint. One thing is clear: agriculture produces greenhouse gas emissions. They come, among other things, from the digestion of ruminants and from the use of agricultural soils, and they are mainly the result of natural processes.

It is therefore not possible to reduce them to zero. But we must reduce emissions wherever we can, by improving processes, not by cutting agricultural production in our state. Moving production to other regions with lower standards would not help the climate. On the contrary, it would undermine global climate protection efforts.

Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture in Baden-Württemberg are moving in the right direction: they have been declining for years.

I want to be very clear: agriculture, and especially the preservation of grassland as an important carbon sink, is part of the solution.

V. Campaign for the State's Quality Programs

Sustainable agriculture in Baden-Württemberg needs more than good and reliable production conditions and framework conditions. It also needs demand for local products.

The state's quality programs, the Baden-Württemberg Quality Seal and the Baden-Württemberg Organic Seal, play an important role here. They guarantee that every step, from production to processing and marketing, takes place in Baden-Württemberg. With these two proven labels, the state makes high-quality regional products easy to recognize, and regional origin and value creation become visible on supermarket shelves.

With our newly launched consumer campaign "Echt aus BW," we are drawing even more attention to the quality programs and to our farming families. The campaign runs in many places, both online and offline, so that we can reach as many people in Baden-Württemberg as possible and raise awareness of regional quality.

VI. International Year of the Woman Farmer

In doing so, we are also making the women farmers behind these products more visible.

Women around the world, and very concretely here in Baden-Württemberg, make a vital contribution to agriculture and food security. I therefore find it a powerful signal that this year's Right Livelihood Award, often called the Alternative Nobel Prize, goes to the Rural Women's Assembly, a movement of more than 178,000 small-scale women farmers from eleven countries in southern Africa.

To highlight the important role women play in agriculture and to honor their work, the United Nations has declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer. The aim is to draw attention to structural challenges, such as access to resources, education and financial services.

As a state, we want to play an active part in this and help drive change.

VII. Conclusion and Thanks

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's conference gives us the chance to look beyond our own horizons and learn from experiences in other parts of the world, without losing sight of agriculture here in our region.

I am convinced that we will all take important ideas home with us today.

Thank you very much.