

International Eckart Witzigmann Prize 2010 Awards Presentation on Monday, 12 July 2010

Video message from HRH Prince Charles of Wales

Ladies and Gentlemen,
meine Damen und Herren,

I am very sorry that I am not able to attend the exquisite dinner in a very stylish atmosphere this evening in Stuttgart. But at least through my disembodied presence I am not adding to my CO2 footprint. I would also have liked to take part in your stimulating conversations: they will no doubt be about topics of joint interest – apart from football, about which we should probably say nothing.

Knowing that I would be unable to attend in person, my cousin Philipp Fürst zu Hohenlohe Langenburg was kind enough to travel to my home in Gloucestershire and present me with my prize. So, my first duty this evening is to thank the prize committee for honouring me in this unexpected way and to join in congratulating my fellow prizewinners. Now, if I may, I would also like to congratulate the state of Baden-Württemberg for placing such strong emphasis on the importance of good and healthy food. At a time when so much of the world is turning agri-culture into agri-industry it is enormously encouraging that a state, which is celebrated around the world for the excellence of its car manufactory, should understand that its food production needs to be an entirely different process. Indeed I understand that the region of Hohenlohe has the highest density of organic farms in Europe, with many farmers specializing in the ancient breeds of Boeuf de Hohenlohe and Schwäbisch-Hällisches-Landschwein. Nor is it a surprise that the university in Bad Mergentheim offers the only degree course in the study of culinary art.

The topics of food production and safety are currently much discussed in the media. And I feel just as strongly about them as you do. It is often argued that the growing world population can only be fed by means of more intensive agriculture, with ever bigger farms and ever more efficient production techniques. In this scenario traditional practices are discarded in favour of modern systems that require using fossil fuels, chemicals and heavy machinery. Not to mention gene technology.

I do understand why industrially produced food is so attractive to some people. All of whom, I'm convinced, have the best of intentions. But I think it is very important that society recognizes this, the true cost, not just in environmental terms, but also in terms of its impact on our own health. If we lose the essential balance and disrupt the virtual circle of natural processes, then we risk incurring long-term and unmanageable costs. If we go on taking from nature and never giving anything back to her, then the ultimate price to pay will be a very heavy one, as we are beginning to discover. The truth is that by treating food as an easy commodity, rather than a precious gift from nature, we have started playing games with our health and with the environment, from which humanity can only stand to lose. Like many of you I believe fundamentally that the solution to global food security and shortages, climate crisis and our grandchildren's future rest largely with the truly sustainable farmer, who works in harmony with nature, harvesting positive forces through healthy soil, healthy crops and healthy animals, and in so doing providing healthy food. But it is vital that more people know and understand this.

Ladies and gentlemen, your dedication to natural, healthy food in conjunction with the art of preparing food makes you exemplary, not only for other Europeans but also for the rest of the world. I hope very much that at some time in the future I will be able to join you for a dinner, and in the meanwhile I wish you every success.

Internationale Eckart Witzigmann Preis GmbH

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