

Speech Draft
for Mr Sándor Fazekas minister
2nd of February, 2018, Karcag

Ladies and Gentleman, Dear Friends!

Our climate is changing, as it has always changed throughout Earth's history. The problem is that it is changing at a rate that makes it clear that we can no longer only observe natural processes, but also see the effects of human activities. Human activities that have serious consequences.

Every human on Earth has 1.8 hectares of land; The ecological footprint of one inhabitant of Hungary is 3.7 hectares. This means that we cultivate and exploit twice as much space as it is available. Of course, Hungary is not alone in this, but it hardly cheers you up.

Climate change is not just an environmental issue. A few years ago, when the first particularly heat wave hit us, problems appeared that no one expected. We anticipated that elderly, sick people might take bad. But no one expected that in the afternoon, when people get home from work, and finally want take a shower, the poisonous gas from their gas boiler will not ventilate as usual - the ambulances had a lot of poisoned patients. And we didn't expect that a lot of children would brought with burns - because of the hot climbing frames and slides from the playgrounds. And of course these are just a few examples. When climate changes, everything changes.

Climate change affects all spheres of life, including all sectors of government. That is why it is important that the National Climate Change Strategy developed by the government covering the entire government be adopted as soon as possible.

On behalf of Hungary, president János Áder signed the Paris Climate Agreement in the fall of 2015. The main goal of this is to ensure that the global temperature increase does not exceed 2 °C. But this is a global average.

The effects of climate change do not appear to the same extent on the planet: in some places the effects are stronger, while in others they are not, or only barely. In some regions, the average temperature increase can be up to three times the global average temperature increase. Experts do mention our region by name: if the global average temperature rises by one and a half degrees, then the summer temperature in Central Europe, i.e. in the Carpathian Basin, may increase by up to 4.5 °C. Therefore, it is especially important for Hungary to keep climate change under control and comply with commitments.

All of this affects mostly the health sector, but it is directly followed by the agricultural sector. Agriculture is directly and indirectly affected by the changes, as we not only have to deal with rising temperatures and dry summers. It is also a consequence of climate change

that weeds and pathogens that have not been characteristic of our country until now are now appearing in masse.

At the same time, agroecology can contribute to the fulfillment of climate commitments. Following the principles of agroecology, the environmental impact and ecological footprint of agriculture can be reduced. Just think that if a variety of plants live together in our farm, we offer natural habitats for bees and other pollinators. And these bees will help us when pollinate our flowers and fruits.

The Hungarian Basic Law requires that our agriculture be free of genetically modified organisms. This regulation is based on the precautionary principle. The principles of the circular economy must also be applied in agriculture. Transforming agriculture into sustainability is a long process, in which expert advice to farmers is particularly important, especially in issues related to climate change.

It is typical that while farming in the Anglo-Saxon countries is called agribusiness, which is clearly focuses on financial approach, the Hungarian language calls it "soil cultivation". In the mindset of Hungarian farmers, love and respect for soil is at the center. The soil, which, if works well, retains significant part of rainwater. The fertile farmland, which can sequester a significant amount of carbon dioxide from the air, thus directly reducing greenhouse effect, thus the warming of the atmosphere.

The climate is a global issue and every single person can do something about it.

It does matter, for example, how do we heat. The Ministry of Agriculture "Heat smartly!" campaign draws attention to the fact that if we burn improper heating or if we burn waste, we seriously endanger our own health and the health of others.

It also matters what do we eat. If we buy foreign goods taken from far away, we also pay for the transport and trade. When we buy Spanish fruit, we also pay for the truck that drives across half of Europe and certainly accelerates climate change. By purchasing domestically grown vegetables and fruits, the environmental impact of transport is minimal. In addition, it provides our compatriots with jobs and livelihoods. Organizing farmers' markets is one way to help domestic vegetables and fruits reach their destination. While 117 farmers' markets operated in Hungary in 2012, in 2017 we could already buy fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruits in 284 farmers 'market.

Climate change - especially the hot, dry summer period - has an adverse effect on our forests. Native oak, beech, and black oak stands are particularly at risk. It is important we use propagating material with a gene pool that it is of southern origin, as that is more tolerant of a drier, warmer climate. At the same time, it is also important to prepare to possible forest fires.

Due to the weather anomalies of recent years, the number and intensity of forest fires in Hungary have increased. Number of large fires over 50 hectares increased drastically, and forest fires affecting areas larger than 1,000 hectares also appeared (Kunfehértó, Bugac). The relevant information and communication project "Forest fire prevention and training program in Hungary" won the requested support.

Settlements must prepare for climate change. It does matter whether we have drinking fountains and rows of trees providing shade. It does matter if new buildings allow the city to be ventilated at hot summer nights; and it does matter if paving on the roads and squares in black or light gray. The settlement's adaptation steps are determined by the settlement's climate strategy. There are plenty of good examples and measures that can be copied, for example, on the website of the Association of Climate-Friendly Settlements.

One of the best ways to teach environmental relationships is to establish school gardens. Here, children (and parents) can experience the interdependence of environmental systems up close. Through the school gardens, a significant part of the curriculum becomes tangible, but the result of the program is also the love and appreciation of the plants and animals that we live with.

Year 2018 has particular importance for the climate. The UN will hold its annual climate meeting in Poland, where commitments of the Paris Climate Agreement will have to be translated into concrete actions. At the climate summit to be held in Katowice, experts and diplomats are expected to have sharp discussions. At the same time, as I said, every single person can do something for our climate.

Keeping this in mind, I wish you a successful conference!