

Muenster, 5th November 2004

“Declaration of Muenster“

At the 10th sector seminar “Agricultural Engineering” held in Muenster on November 4th and 5th 2004, the participating works councils from companies of the German agricultural engineering sector agreed upon the following points:

1. In the agricultural engineering sector, unpaid overtime does not serve as an appropriate instrument for the reduction of costs and to strengthen international competitiveness. We, works councils representatives from companies of the German agricultural engineering sector, therefore request the IG Metall and its partners not to sign any collective agreements on the introduction of unpaid overtime in this industrial sector. Unpaid overtime might only lead to an improvement of the competitiveness of a few individual companies. This advantage will disappear as soon as other enterprises of the industry have copied this procedure. More generally, unpaid overtime does not lead to productivity gains since the need for improving production processes and work organisation is reduced by relying on unpaid overtime. Unpaid overtime ultimately results in a reduction of employees' income, time off for recreation and consequently leads to a decline in working conditions.
2. The very efficient agricultural engineering industry in Germany is characterised by high flexibility. We, as the works councils of the agricultural engineering sector believe that working hours may be handled flexible, in order to meet business requirements. However, working time regulations also have to respect the employees' interests and the right of co-determination. Therefore, we reject the idea of any working time organisation exclusively determined by the company's business needs. So far the collective agreements concluded with the IG Metall are a sufficient framework for working time flexibility at the company level.
3. Wages are costs, and each company has to react to changes and cost developments. But with the principle "even more cheaper", the markets of tomorrow in the agricultural engineering sector can not be captured. Therefore, our principle is: "better instead of cheaper". Accordingly, there is a need to improve all operational procedures and widespread investments strengthen existing productions sites and improve competitiveness. We have to be better and faster than other players on the international markets. It is not possible to compete on remuneration with production sites in so-called low-wage countries!
4. We, works councils from companies of the German agricultural engineering sector, emphasise that we will not sign any company agreement on the introduction of unpaid overtime or the expansion of the collectively agreed weekly working hours since such agreements are unlawful. Furthermore we are committed to the well established cooperation between social partners at the company level and in collective bargaining and will also in the future cooperation trustful with the IG Metall.