



The role of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry is, with the support of science and practical experience, to promote agriculture and forestry and related activities, for the benefit of society. The Academy was founded in 1811 at the initiative of Karl XIV Johan and started its work on 28 January 1813.

The Academy's 213th Commemorative Meeting

January 28, 2025

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Academy President Inger Andersson

The Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), January 28, 2025

Introductory speech Commemorative Meeting

Your Majesties,

Your Excellency,

State Secretary,

Honorary Fellows

Esteemed Fellows and laureates

Distinguished Guests

A warm welcome to the 2025 Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry.

We are deeply honored that His Majesty the King has the opportunity to attend this year's Commemorative meeting. The Vice President and I greatly appreciated our conversation at the palace when we took office.

Twenty-five years ago, Thord Eriksson, secretary of the Agriculture Section at the time, called me to ask if I would like to join a committee. I replied that I would be happy to, and the following year, I was elected as a fellow of the academy. Thord is with us today, and I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to you for making that call!

My first year as President has now come to a close. It has been an invaluable year, incredibly rewarding to gain an overview of the Academy's collective activities by attending various meetings, roundtable discussions, and providing consultation responses to critical government inquiries. Not the least, it has been valuable to get to know even more fellows from all sections and to engage with the wide range of expertise that exists both in breadth and depth.

In our global environment this past year has been dark. The global temperature rise in 2024 was the highest since measurements started, which requires increased focus on climate adaptations of various kinds. The geopolitical developments, such as the war in Ukraine, unrest in the Middle East and other parts of the world, are of great significance and impact the direction of our activities.

As mentioned, my first year as President of KSLA has provided insights that have been crucial in our efforts to develop a new strategic framework for KSLA's activities for 2025–2028.

Promoting agriculture and forestry, as well as a broader perspective on business and society as a whole, is of great importance. Increased collaboration within the Academy – across sections and committees – and with other Royal Academies, along with interdisciplinary expertise, is therefore essential for the four areas we focus on.

The first area concerns the management of the climate and environment in the primary sector, with significant relevance for biological life and societal development.

Climate change results in serious consequences that significantly alter the primary sector, as well as our living conditions.

Biodiversity has been in focus for several committees and will continue to be so.

Compared to other industries, there is considerable complexity within the primary sector linked to pre-conditions of natural science. One example in the forest industry is the spread of pests, such as the spruce bark beetle.

This work needs to be pushed forward, and KSLA has great possibilities to contribute with various solutions and to provide a platform for dialogue between politics, businesses, and research.

The second area concerns water issues such as wetlands and land use, which require continued focus.

Wetlands in forest and agricultural landscapes are important for both biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Sustainable water uses in a changing climate, with droughts and floods, is another focus. We can still recall the consequences of the 2018 drought, as well as recent events in the Los Angeles area and the connection to drought.

Other prioritized areas include the Baltic Sea and sustainable fishing.

The aim is to provide an overview and clarify the steps necessary to achieve long-term sustainability, with regards to ecological, economic, and social dimensions.

The third area relates to climate change, pandemics, wars, and global unrest, which make food security and preparedness a critical societal issue.

Taken together, this requires the primary value chains to be managed in their entirety. One example is the availability of fertilizers, which was impacted by the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

Today, KSLA is highly active in this area, and over the next four-year period, security and preparedness in the primary sector will become even more important. There are several issues to address, and a gradual elaboration of historical lessons to be learned, which can benefit both businesses and society.

The fourth area concerns the special demands on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technological development in industries undergoing transformation.

The development of AI will impact all sectors of society. How this happens, largely depends on how we act. In the primary sector, the development of AI and digitalization has only just begun. One example is the innovative way of thinning forests using drones.

Innovation will have to be managed, both in terms of technology and organizational structure. A certain focus on collaboration will be prioritized.

The Swedish Board of Agriculture has appointed Linköping University to manage the knowledge hub for agricultural digitalization, which will be a valuable contributor.

What other overarching issues are there?

The significance of the EU is increasing due to the geopolitical situation, not only within legislation, where much is happening today. Engaged participation from Sweden in the entire process – from start to finish – is very important and must be further developed. For that, KSLA can contribute by providing input regarding the primary sector.

Increased collaboration is valuable at a Nordic level, and with the rest of the world. At the Nordic Council of Ministers' meeting in June 2024, a broad range of areas for cooperation on resilience in food supply and forestry were decided, as outlined in the so-called Karlstad Declaration. It is crucial that this cooperation yields tangible results.

Already in high school, more students are choosing economics tracks over natural sciences. The number of young people applying for education in the primary sector is decreasing. A new and important program for the industry will start at SLU in 2025: a Master's degree in Digitalized Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry. How can KSLA help increase interest in these educational programs?

This has been an overall presentation of the areas we are planning for from now onwards. We know that our turbulent environment may lead to reprioritization. However, with the competence and experience possessed by the fellows of the Academy, along with the expertise and action demonstrated daily by the staff of the office, we will be able to address that too. This first year as President has been very eventful and important, and I look forward to the coming three years.

Let me conclude with our cornerstone, our portal paragraph:

“The task of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry is to promote agriculture and forestry and associated activities with the support of science and practical experience and in the interest of society”

Thank you!

Inger Andersson



Academy Secretary Peter Normark

The Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), January 28, 2025

Academy issues in the eye of the storm

Your Majesties,

Your Excellency,

State Secretary,

Honorary Fellows

Esteemed Fellows and laureates

Distinguished Guests

A warm welcome to this year's Commemorative Meeting!

We are delighted to welcome all of you to yet another Commemorative Meeting. This year, we focus particularly on the role of the Swedish academies in society, and the capacity of our sector to function in a more uncertain world.

We are especially honored to have His Majesty the King attending this year's ceremony. From the latest Stenhammar Day, we know how deeply involved His Majesty is in the development of the primary sector.

In a world with significant societal challenges, our academies play an increasingly vital role. The challenges regarding climate and biodiversity need to be addressed at both societal and corporate levels. We live in a geopolitical context where we must continue developing our food security and preparedness. The focus on facts – truth or falsehood – needs to be managed within the ongoing knowledge development in various societal spheres.

In this context, we see that our Royal Academies can play a particularly important role in promoting thoughtful, knowledge-based discussions in our seminars, roundtables, and workshops. Through this, we can drive knowledge development, based on both research and practical insights in our sector. When we actively pursue this approach, we create the conditions for the development of not only our primary sector but society at large, guiding it towards a strengthened democracy, knowledge-based resilience, and ensuring that important perspectives and inputs reach key decision-makers at both the societal and corporate levels.

KSLA is built on initiatives and work driven by our fellows. I mentioned this one year ago, and it remains true – we are both amazed and proud of the commitment and efforts that all our fellows contribute with to the development of KSLA’s most pressing issues.

The President has, in her speech, shared details of KSLA’s updated strategic framework. I would like to briefly comment on what we have already accomplished in the past year.

How we implement the framework in practice

Our Biodiversity Committee has worked intensively this year, concerning both forestry and agriculture. Seminars and roundtables have been organized, with a special focus on deepening knowledge on measuring biodiversity and how to create and increase resilience in the area. KSLA bases our dialogues on well-grounded facts.

The issue of resource efficiency at a societal level has been addressed in the work carried out under the title “Bruka utan att förbruka [“Cultivating without depleting”], resulting in a publication which highlights several important perspectives on this matter. The main focus has been on how we can manage resource use in the primary sector to achieve a robust future supply, both nationally and globally. In other words, how can the planet provide for humanity? KSLA arranged two seminars based on the publication, whereof one for RIFO, the Swedish Parliament's network for research-engaged members.

KSLA has a committee that works with land and water issues. This year, a deliberation focused on our agricultural land was conducted. In Sweden, there is significant pressure to use agricultural land for other purposes. During the deliberation, examples were shared of how other countries, like Germany, as well as individual municipalities, such as Jönköping, have worked to secure the future of agricultural land.

Our program on preparedness has continued within four working groups, including cooperation with other Royal Academies, such as the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences. The working groups for agriculture/food and forestry/energy have conducted seminars and roundtables focusing on the vital value chains for animal production and energy. That is, securing supply of protein and heating for the Swedish population. An anthology on historical lessons will be published in 2025.

KSLA has also undertaken a study trip to southern Finland, particularly Nyland, where several fellows took part of an ambitious program, including visits to Hanaholmen/National Emergency Supply Agency as well as various companies and farms. Great value arises from the comparisons between our two countries. A special thank you to our fellow Bengt Sohlberg for initiating this trip.

KSLA is now initiating a project on Artificial Intelligence. The aim is to create an overview of developments in the primary sector, as well as to analyze and assess several active cases. We will benefit from collaborating with several of our sister academies on this matter.

Committees, panels, and board committees

Not all of our work falls under these headings. Significant committee work has been carried out regarding evidence for sustainable forest management, future cultivation systems, and, not least, infectious animal diseases.

A new committee focusing on forest production in a changing climate has been launched. Initiatives are being taken on how we can simultaneously advance environmental and climate goals on the one hand, while fostering business development of forest production on the other. The committee engages in close cooperation with Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, which has initiated a similar project.

This year, Sweden hosted the Global Forest Research Congress, IUFRO, in collaboration with SLU [Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences]. It has been 100 years since the last congress in Stockholm. KSLA was one of the initiators, and we were responsible for a comprehensive excursion where nearly 400 researchers visited our forest property in Barksätter and met researchers presenting our projects on-site. It was exciting to have so many nationalities represented in the forests of Södermanland.

This year, the historical unit has executed tremendous work in describing and analyzing the agricultural policy shift that occurred at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. This work appears particularly important as we now need to take new steps to strengthen our preparedness.

Our board committees have also been active. The Committee on Global and European Affairs has continued its intense focus on how EU-level decisions affect Swedish forests. The future of European agricultural policy has also been highlighted. The Research Committee has worked on tracking the future of research policy, and the Youth Committee has addressed how we can strengthen recruitment in the agricultural industries.

In December, we organized a discussion with the Minister for Rural Affairs in collaboration with Hushållningssällskapet. It is a pleasure to engage in a more open format for conversation, and we look forward to continuing to contribute with knowledge on the development of the primary sector. We see that much is happening, both regarding ongoing and completed government inquiries.

Many key issues for the agricultural industry are being prepared in departments, government inquiries, government agencies, and at the European level. KSLA has been particularly active this year, providing numerous contributions and consultation responses. Among the most notable is our involvement in forest policy issues, where we arranged a special roundtable to provide input to the government committee.

Landscape Meals Project

The project Sveriges Landskapsmåltider [Landscape Meals of Sweden] was concluded through an artisan food conference at KSLA in late spring of 2024. This initiative will be completed now at the turn of the year but will continue through a new focus on the development of culinary destinations. Hushållningssällskapet will take a leading role here, along with Måltidsakademien [the Meal Academy] and Gastronomiska Akademien [the Gastronomical Academy]. KSLA will contribute with its knowledge from farm to fork. In just a moment, we will be invited to dine in the Golden Hall. This year, our fellow Ingela Stenson is responsible for the meals. Last year, we thanked our honorary fellow Christina Möller for her contributions over three decades as responsible for the meals at our Commemorative Meetings. This year, we would also like to express our gratitude to our fellow Carl Jan Granqvist for his contributions over an equally long period.

Looking Ahead

At KSLA, we see that many of our issues are currently in the eye of the storm. As an academy, we possess excellent conditions to function as a bridge between science- or experience-based knowledge development on the one hand, and practical solutions to the challenges facing the primary sector on the other. We look forward to continuing this important work.

We are deeply grateful to all our fellows who contribute with their knowledge and efforts to address these crucial issues. I would like to extend a special welcome to our newly elected fellows, not only as fellows of the academy but also as active colleagues. Our goal is for each of you to find roles in a working group, writing a consultation response, participate in a seminar, or roundtable. To ensure everything functions smoothly, we also have a small and efficient office that supports our efforts.

We look ahead to a year when many important decisions for our industries will take place at various levels. KSLA aims to be a wise force to count on in this context.

With that, I would like to extend a warm invitation to all of you, both new and long-established fellows, to participate and contribute, not only during this evening but to all that we have to offer throughout the coming years.

Thank you all for your attention!

Peter Normark



Principal Speech, Lars Strannegård

The Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), January 28, 2025

Your Majesties,

Your Excellency,

State Secretary,

Fellows of the academy

Distinguished Guests,

Some time ago, I listened to the head of education at one of the largest tech companies in the world. He spoke about knowledge in the future and the development needs of schools. He frequently used the word "future," asserting that the study of factual knowledge would soon be a thing of the past. Memorizing knowledge, he said, was a 20th-century construct. All facts are now just a Google search away, and therefore, schools should focus on teaching programming and strategies for how to acquire knowledge. Facts, he suggested, are no longer something for our minds to hold onto.

Just a few weeks ago, I listened to another executive, also a tech evangelist, discussing generative AI. Tools like ChatGPT would make studying unnecessary, and anyone eager to keep up with the rapidly accelerating train toward the future would do well in learning everything about how large language models (LLMs) work. Schools should now focus on how to "prompt" AI – how to interact with it to make it as effective as possible. The metaphor of the train speeding toward the future is common, and the grim warning is that those who don't get on will be left behind at the platform. Or, perhaps, these days, at the ground terminal as the rocket toward the future heads into space.

In Sweden, we are used to seeing what was once considered central to learning being discarded. The Swedish school system is particularly eager to embrace the most modern and contemporary in terms of education and pedagogy. This has led to extreme swings in direction, where things once thought to be based on tried and tested experience have later been ridiculed as hopelessly outdated. Memorizing facts and teacher-led instruction, once seen as the core of teaching for decades, have instead become symbols of antiquity and conservatism. Interestingly enough, the drive for change has been justified by the need to be close to the cutting edge of research. As a result, terms and concepts like "learning curiosity," "non-authoritarianism," "low-affect engagement," and "student influence" have come to the forefront, while facts and knowledge have taken a step back. Few would likely endorse the view that Swedish education has had a clear, positive development. Change is

not always for the better, and the so-called research frontier is not always easy to apply in practice. There is a reason why the research frontier must be set in relation to proven experience. It takes time before research findings become proven experience. The research frontier is not the same as best practices.

In the White House, a well-known figure is now back. At his right hand sits the mega-maga-billionaire Musk, a man who also does not mince words. During Trump's first presidency, his staff coined the term "alternative facts," which evoked a stark and eerie association with George Orwell's novel *1984*. In that dystopia, the Ministry of Truth had the task of producing lies, and the expression "alternative facts" is tailor-made for those who wants to distort the truth.

Facts are, of course, not subject to alternatives. "Alternative facts" are, in fact, a euphemism for outright lies. It is possible, of course, to speak of complementary facts – things that describe a phenomenon from different perspectives. A little later tonight, if all goes well, we will be served wine. The facts are that the wine is made from certain types of grapes, pressed in a particular way, aged for a specific period, and bottled in a certain manner. Those are facts. It is also a fact that accidents involving recreational boats and apartment fights are often linked to alcohol, and that wine is a cultural beverage. These are truths that it does not matter whether we believe or not. They are not alternatives, but different, seemingly contradictory, truths that coexist. Together, they describe a complex phenomenon. However, the fact that wine may have aromas reminiscent of cherries, yellow apples, petroleum, butter, and toasted bread is not a fact; it is an expression of aesthetic experiences, associations, and interpretations. A wine connoisseur who has the ability to verbalize their experiences may present interpretations that mean something to others. But it is of utmost importance that we do not confuse what is truth with what is perspective and opinion.

Lying was long considered something outrageous. A discovered lie was a legitimate reason to sever a relationship or demand the resignation of someone in power. But recently, a shift has occurred, and it's not just the American president's fault. He has certainly made large-scale lying an art form of its own, evidently inspired by a kind of Soviet shamelessness, where the lie's lack of any attempt to hide that it is a lie, actually enhances its character as a tool of power. Not even pretending to speak the truth is a particularly chilling form of master suppression technique. Among the most blatant lies that have come from the U.S. recently is the one about Haitian immigrants in Ohio supposedly eating dogs and cats. This kind of public lying is now a constant part of our media-saturated lives – less shameful and easier to get away with than just a few years ago. The distortion of reality we are experiencing today occurs on a different level than before. It is so profound, so existentially challenging, that we can rightly speak of an *ontological crisis*. The distortion of reality and truth today is no longer just about someone claiming something false that can be disproven by those who know better. What has happened is that, through artificial intelligence, we can be manipulated into seeing and hearing things with our own eyes and ears that appear credible but never actually took place and were never said. The examples of images and videos we thought were authentic but later turned out to be fabrications are growing constantly, spreading widely through algorithms and achieving maximum impact on social media. For most people, it will soon be virtually impossible to validate the truthfulness of what they see and hear. We don't know whether the images flooding our screens are real or AI-generated. Nor can we trust that what the person on the screen is saying has actually been said or if they even speak the language that is coming from their mouth in the video. We can no longer, and should no longer, trust our own eyes. Or ears.

More than forty years ago, Jean Baudrillard wrote that signs of reality were on the way to replacing reality itself, or at least relegating it to the backdrop. He feared that the true and the real were becoming secondary and uninteresting, at risk of losing value compared to an enhanced, made-up, and distorted description of reality. He used the concepts of

“simulation” and “simulacra” to describe an emerging existence where we are unable, or perhaps unwilling, to distinguish between the truly real and the spectacular version of reality. And now, we are indeed there. Baudrillard has proven to be a true oracle. In a world where images and films can be total fabrications, the reality as it appears before our eyes must be subject to reflection and suspicion, and consequently, more and more media companies are ceasing to publish images from the public and uncontrolled sources.

The nearly existential uncertainty that prevails has crept into our inner lives. We can no longer be sure if our attitudes, opinions, or feelings are our own. Perhaps they have been fabricated by someone else and internalized to the extent that we believe they are our own. What is most frightening is if this happens without our awareness, and we are led to believe that we have control over ourselves.

So how do we handle this ontological crisis? How should we navigate a media landscape that is so perforated with false claims to truth and simulated realities? As so often, the answer lies in the individual’s ability to see through and resist manipulations, which must be trained through practice in fact-finding, reflection, judgment, and articulation. Ensuring facts, critical thinking, interpretative skills, and free expression are more important than ever. Our academies and universities must take their ontological responsibility even more seriously. We cannot afford to politicize them or turn them into tools for anything other than their original mission: to seek truth and knowledge through science and analysis, to critically examine reality as it appears before our eyes, and to interpret it. There is a significant deficit in analytical skills when it comes to texts, images, and videos. The media, universities, and Royal Academies must have their credibility at the top of their priority lists. They cannot deviate even a degree from their fact-based, integrity-filled, and scientifically calibrated compass.

In the latest study of World Economic Forum’s on risks and threats, manipulated images and disinformation top the list. This can be seen as a greater existential threat than any single nation, and thus becomes a matter for our total defense. It is time that we in Sweden create a deep awareness of how the distortions of our digitalized world have far-reaching and existentially challenging consequences for our trust, and perception of reality. And, of course, for our democracy. We fought the pandemic with immunity shots. The crisis we are facing now can also be fought with vaccinations. But this time, it is not in the form of injections, but through knowledge, awareness, and ontological sensitivity.

It is more important than ever for scientific institutions to steadfastly adhere to fundamental academic virtues such as the pursuit of truth, impartiality, and intellectual courage. Never have academia and academies been more important than now. Free and independent organizations, such as the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, are needed more than ever. The very word “academy” comes from the place outside Athens where Plato is said to have taught his disciples. It was solely knowledge and argumentation that formed the foundation: the contributions of the disciples, the juniors, were valued just as highly as Plato’s. Collegiality runs like a red thread throughout academic history. It is the collegial review – “peer review” – that is the soul of science. Deeply knowledgeable researchers assess the work of other researchers. Impartiality and intellectual courage mean that arguments are treated as arguments in their own right, not based on who delivers them. It is about the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, not driven by positioning, envy, or personal gain. Above all, it is not driven by political or ideological agendas. It is about being aware that we might be wrong, being open to new arguments, and therefore prepared to change our stance.

The protection of facts and the academic approach is also a cornerstone of how we should conduct education. When calls are made for reforms, change, and updates to pedagogy and learning, far too many are swept along. The seductive rhetoric of tech evangelists about

Googling and prompting as substitutes for factual knowledge leads us down a truly dangerous path. Many of the answers to future questions are, as so often, found in history. That is not the same as walking backward into the future or being a reactionary. To protect facts, science, and to take academic virtues seriously is to take proven experience seriously. It is likely the safest way to meet the future. Plato, even though he no longer walks this earth, has much to say about our education, academies, and generative AI. And most importantly, about two central and interconnected themes. Namely, how we generate and assess knowledge in the digitally transformed time we live in, and the absolutely central role that respect and humility play in the search for truth. We know exactly what needs to be done to move hopefully toward the future. It's not rocket science. It's simply about integrity and judgment.

Thank you!

Lars Strannegård