

DFA Winter Conference Recap

DFA Winter Conference | Vienna | 22–23 January 2026



Below are the punchy takeaways (what matters, what worked, what to watch).

Day 1 — Operations, risk, efficiency, markets

When disaster strikes: PRRS rehab + local FMD restrictions

Morten Nielsen, Dan-Slovakia

Context

- PRRS in 2023 triggered a decision to rehabilitate the herd without stopping production.
- Just before finalising the plan, local Foot & Mouth Disease restrictions changed the logistics overnight (finishers could not be sent to slaughter).

Key takeaways

- Start with alignment: one shared picture across managers, vets and teams before you launch actions.
- Turn best vet practice into simple routines people can actually follow every day.
- Build a plan that can flex: external restrictions happen — prepare decision rules in advance.
- Quote worth remembering: disease control is leadership before veterinary science.

Assets

- Slides:

<https://www.danishfarmersabroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/DFA-presentation-Jan-2026-Morten-Nielsen-DSA.pdf>

Adjusting large-scale farming to new climate reality

Jim McCarthy, Southern Harvest, Romania

Context

- 20,600 ha in NE Romania facing unstable rainfall and higher temperatures (especially August).
- Shift from 'how we used to farm' to 'how the land behaves now'.

Key takeaways

- Adapt crop choice and rotations to the new risk pattern (not the old averages).
- Use digital field management to tighten decisions and reduce variability.
- Invest in soil organic matter and regenerative practices to retain moisture.
- Change management is part of agronomy: investors and employees must buy into the transition.

Assets

- Slides: <https://www.danishfarmersabroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Danish-Farmers-abroad-SHR-JM-.pdf>

Lean that actually sticks: efficiency + motivation

Agnieszka Dorawa, Goodvalley, Poland

Context

- Lean used in large operations (pigs + land) to improve flow, engagement and execution.

Key takeaways

- Prefer pull over push: let improvements be owned by the people closest to the work.
- Use short, visual routines (meetings + boards) to keep progress alive.
- Build a culture where small improvements are celebrated — then scale them.
- LOVE framework: Lean, Opportunities, Visual, Engagement.

Assets

- Slide decks:
https://www.danishfarmersabroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/DFA-VIENNA-01_2026-GOODVALLEY-AGRO.pdf

Biosecurity: 'to be or not to be'

Bjarne Vest, Vestin

Context

- Biosecurity is not a checklist — it is a system and a behaviour.
- Real-life examples included ASF risk and how different countries respond.

Key takeaways

- Design biosecurity as a strategy: people, flows, access, hygiene, governance.

- Train for discipline: the weak link is rarely the protocol — it is the habit.
- Benchmark your 'risk hotspots' and close gaps with simple controls.

The future of global pig production: where & how

Henrik Nielsen, DanBred

Context

- Global pig production overview and expected structural shifts.

Key takeaways

- Consolidation and integration will continue — scale and professionalism keep rising.
- Regional growth differs: Asia remains dominant; Latin America and Oceania expected to grow (driven by investment and genetics).
- Competitive advantage will increasingly come from health, efficiency, and genetics + data.

Assets

- Slides:

https://www.danishfarmersabroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-DFA-Vienna_Global-pig-production_Henrik-Nielsen.pdf

Navigating the green transition: resilience + profitability

Kiki Kuiper, Cargill

Context

- How an international player supports farmers and value chains through sustainability demands.

Key takeaways

- Sustainability will keep moving 'down the chain' via customer requirements and partnerships.
- Programs and tools matter when they deliver measurable farm-level outcomes (not just reporting).
- Nutrition and regenerative approaches are positioned as levers for performance + footprint.

Day 2 — Policy, geopolitics, competitiveness

The challenges of European farmers: a historical lens

Tom Axelgaard, Goodvalley

Context

- A fast timeline from 1970 to today: policy priorities have shifted repeatedly.

Key takeaways

- We moved from ‘produce more’ to multiple objectives: climate, nature, water, animal welfare — while still needing food security.
- Big retail and logistics improved efficiency, but also created dependency and margin pressure.
- Next decade: produce more with less land and fewer people — productivity and innovation become non-negotiable.

Structural developments in the EU agri-sector: transitions + geopolitics

Jürgen Tack, European Landowners’ Organization

Context

- A landowner and farming enterprise perspective on Europe’s strategic direction.

Key takeaways

- Geopolitics is now ‘inside’ farm strategy: war, trade blocs, and strategic autonomy affect inputs and markets.
- The transition agenda (climate, water, biodiversity) is reshaping requirements — and the investment case.
- Competitiveness depends on innovation, realistic timelines, and workable rules that allow investment.

Agri-food politics from inside the EU: what MEPs are fighting for

Dr. Jessika van Leeuwen, MEP

Context

- Perspective from EU policymaking across agriculture, trade and regional development.

Key takeaways

- Core tension: deliver food security while meeting climate and environmental goals.
- Productivity, investment and generational renewal are increasingly central to the debate.
- Trade and regulation choices will directly influence farm costs and competitiveness.