###### **VIKING sets a new turnover record:**

###### **Increase of 16.5 per cent in 2014**

**Record turnover for VIKING**

*Langkampfen/Kufstein, 16 April 2015.* VIKING GmbH has delivered positive results for 2014. Following the pleasing results for 2013 – in which **turnover** broke through the 150 million euros barrier for the first time – the gardening power tool manufacturer managed to once again set a new record. The Tyrolean company increased its turnover during the last fiscal year by 16.5% – from 153.9 to 179.3 million euros. The positive trend is evident when figures are compared over a five-year period, during which turnover increased by 62% (from 110.5 to 179.3 million euros). The number of **employees** also rose again. In 2013, the company's workforce numbered 329 employees. In 2014, the number of employees rose to 350 – an increase of over 6%. Since 2009, the company has increased its workforce by exactly 100 employees. This trend affirms the importance of VIKING as a major employer in the Tyrolean lowlands region. Employee training is particularly highly valued at VIKING. The **balance sheet total** for 2014 was 111.9 million euros, representing an increase of just under 10% over the previous year (101.8 million euros). The **equity ratio** currently stands at 64%. These figures confirm the financial stability and independence of the Tyrolean gardening power tool manufacturer.

Looking at the markets, the outstanding quality of VIKING products is clearly valued by customers throughout Europe. The company’s export share remains at the same high level of 98 percent. Germany, France and Benelux are the top 3 sales markets. "The excellent results from the previous year confirm that our investment in the VIKING brand has been worthwhile. We will continue with this approach and our pursuit of the premium strategy," says a contented Peter Pretzsch, Managing Director of VIKING GmbH.

**Innovative gardening aids for the current season**

VIKING understands the requirements and challenges involved the care of green areas and continually invests in the development of new gardening aids. The Tyrolean company has also launched a number of new and innovative products for the current season. Comfortable and reliable, they make gardening significantly easier.

The new **7 Series lawn mowers** were specially designed for professional use. The professional mowers were put to the test in extensive practical trials. The results speak for themselves: they are safe to operate, reliable even in difficult conditions, robust and durable. Thanks to their innovative magnesium housing in combination with a plastic insert, they are also relatively lightweight. Steel side protection, a solid rubber front bumper, thick rubber tyres and metal rims provide the necessary protection for the mower. There are two models with hydrostatic drive available – MB 756 YS and MB 756 YC. The latter is equipped with a mono-comfort handlebar. This gives users direct and easy access to the grass catcher box, for example. Safety is also a top priority in the new 7 Series. The innovative blade brake clutch, for example, disconnects the engine from the mowing deck as soon as the user releases the blade stop lever. With the 7 Series lawn mowers, VIKING intends to further reinforce its position as a strong retail brand and gain a significant market share in the professional segment.

In addition to products for the professional segment, VIKING is also planning a new product launch for amateur gardeners. The **ME 235 electric mower** is quiet, manoeuvrable and compact, and is suitable for small gardens, front gardens, narrow strips of lawn and other areas up to approx. 300 square metres. It offers simple operation as well as some attractive features. The handlebar, for example, can be adjusted to the user’s body height in two steps in order to prevent back strain. Large recessed grips and an extra-wide aperture in the lid also facilitate handling when emptying the grass catcher box. An integrated level indicator offers additional comfort. At just 13 kg, the ME 235 is the lightweight addition to the VIKING product range.

The innovative **iMow** 6 Series robotic mowers have been available in many countries since 2014. As a result, VIKING has been able to clearly position itself in this fast-growing segment.

VIKING launched further new products onto the market with two redesigned product lines. The **tillers** are now even more ergonomic to handle, feature a solid, robust design and require less effort to operate. The compact HB 445 and HB 445 R tillers are suitable for smaller areas, while models HB 560, HB 585 and HB 685 are ideal for fields, large beds and small arable fields. Special anti-vibration elements significantly reduce vibration, sparing muscles and joints. In the development process, VIKING placed particular importance on high-quality components and safety.

The T4 Series **lawn tractors** for the current season have a sporty new design. In addition to a new look, the tractors also offer improved safety features and easy operation. The single-pedal self-propulsion with innovative forward/reverse drive switching makes manoeuvring and parking easier, even with a small turning circle. Thanks to the practical side discharge, clippings are distributed evenly over the lawn and emptying the grass catcher box is no longer necessary. This saves valuable time. "VIKING customers have extremely high expectations when it comes to technology, comfort and design. Thanks to our innovative spirit and consistent quality management, we are able to develop products that meet the needs of our customers," says Managing Director Peter Pretzsch.

The new **shredder models** are due to be launched in the early summer of 2015. The GE 135 L and GE 140 L electric shredders process branches with a maximum diameter of 40 mm powerfully but quietly. A clever folding mechanism lowers the shredder on the GE 140 L model into the shredder bag for space-saving storage and transport.

**One battery for the entire family**

The battery technology of VIKING's parent company, STIHL, is innovative, environmentally friendly and clean. Furthermore, the energy-efficient and virtually wear-free lithium-ion battery fits all VIKING and STIHL battery-powered machines. The increasing importance of battery production is evident in the growth in this segment. The Competence Centre in Langkampfen currently produces 12 model ranges, including VIKING 3 and 4 Series battery-powered mowers, STIHL HSA 66 hedge trimmers and numerous clearing saws.

Assembly of STIHL MSA 160 chain saws and HTA 65 and HTA 85 pole pruners was also relocated to VIKING last year. "We produce a number of STIHL models that are used for various tasks throughout the year. This means that we can secure jobs in the long term and ensure more consistent capacity utilisation at the plant," says Production Manager and Authorised Representative Josef Koller, emphasising the benefits for VIKING. With battery production for many STIHL and VIKING products based in Langkampfen, VIKING is consolidating its position in the STIHL Group. In addition to motorised saws, hedge trimmers, hedge cutters, angle grinders, brushcutters, clearing saws, blowers, vacuum shredders and pole pruners, VIKING also manufactures special products such as the battery-powered olive harvester for STIHL. Some of these machines are also available in electric versions.

**Award-winning products**

VIKING products regularly receive international awards in recognition of their high quality and attractive design. Two of VIKING's most recent product launches have already won awards, with the 7 Series professional mowers receiving the "red dot design award" and the ME 235 electric mower picking up the "Plus X Award. The design of the iMow MI 6 robotic mower – which was launched onto the market at the beginning of 2014 – earned it both the Good Design and the Green Good Design Award. In addition to attractive design, the international panels of judges also evaluate factors such as environmental compatibility and functionality. This once again confirms that the VIKING premium strategy is the way forward.

**Global success**

VIKING has established itself as a strong retail brand in the European market. During the past year, VIKING further reinforced this position and gained additional market share. Demand for VIKING products is particularly high in neighbouring Germany. With 1,000 Premium Partners in Germany, the gardening power tool manufacturer can rely on a strong dealer network and expand its key position in the specialist market. Poland, Spain, Hungary and Serbia also performed strongly in 2014. "VIKING specialist dealers are highly trained and offer excellent advice to customers at local level. This has enabled us to perform well in these countries," says Wolfgang Simmer, Sales and Marketing Manager, looking back on a successful season.

**European gardening market dominated by a few countries**

Looking at the European gardening market as a whole, the picture is similar. This is confirmed by the current annual report from the German Garden Industry Association (IVG). Germany is the strongest sales market in Europe. In 2013, turnover in Europe amounted to around 85.8 billion euros, 20 percent of which was recorded in Germany. This includes all product groups such as flowers, garden furniture, water pumps and, of course, gardening power tools. Germany is also top of the list for manually-operated lawn mowers – followed by the United Kingdom and France. These three countries together account for around 60 percent of total turnover in Europe. Germany is also an important market for other gardening power tools, with a market share of around 40 percent for garden shredders. France is the biggest market for sales of ride-on mowers, with Germany in second place. Together, both countries account for a market share of around 55 percent. The market for robotic mowers is growing particularly strongly. This segment has been gaining ground in recent years. VIKING is already well established in this segment. "The overall market is increasingly being affected by imports from the Far East and conditions are currently extremely competitive. This makes it all the more impressive that VIKING continues to grow its market share with the iMow product range," says a satisfied Wolfgang Simmer.

**The environment as a key customer**

Environmental policy and environmental management are practised at VIKING. Environmental awareness extends far beyond product development, where the focus is on the reduction of engine emissions and noise as well as the development of alternative drive elements. This has been confirmed by certification from the German Association for the Certification of Management Systems, which was awarded to the gardening power tool manufacturer for the introduction of its environmental management system in accordance with the international ISO 14001 standard. This certification represents a voluntary commitment by the company to continuously minimising the environmental impact of the processes at the plant. In order to be able to meet these requirements, all areas of activity were reviewed with respect to their consumption of resources as well as waste and emissions. Conscious selection of environmentally friendly materials and construction methods, in-house recycling, use of energy-saving LEDs and even the use of ground water as a cooling medium in buildings are just some of the ways in which VIKING aims to achieve its self-imposed environmental targets as well as continuous improvement in the future.

**VIKING: Successful member of the STIHL Group**

As a family-run company, VIKING's decision-taking process remains independent of third-party influence. VIKING has been a fully-owned subsidiary of STIHL International GmbH since 1992. STIHL has been the world's leading chain saw brand since 1971. The products of the two STIHL Group brands – STIHL and VIKING – complement each other perfectly, enabling them to take advantage of synergy effects. Increasing numbers of STIHL's electrical products, such as numerous battery-powered tools and machines, are produced in the plant at Langkampfen.

2014 was a successful fiscal year for the STIHL Group, with increased sales and turnover worldwide.

**VIKING management team:**

Dr. Peter Pretzsch Managing Director

Wolfgang Simmer Sales and Marketing Manager

Josef Koller Production and Market Supply Manager

Michael Dickjürgens Purchasing Manager

Thilo Foersch Finance and Accounting Manager

**Facts & figures: VIKING at a glance**

**Company history**

1981 Founding of VIKING GmbH

1992 VIKING becomes a member of the STIHL Group

2001 Relocation of the company headquarters from Kufstein, Austria to the Competence Centre for Lawn & Garden Equipment in Langkampfen, Austria

2007 First expansion of the VIKING plant

2012 Expansion with an additional 16,000 m² of usable floorspace

**Management**

Dr. Peter Pretzsch

**Product range**

Lawn mowers, robotic mowers, ride-on mowers, garden shredders, scarifiers, tillers as well as numerous battery-powered and electrical products of the STIHL brand.

##### Company figures

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| **Employees** | 250 | 268 | 297 | 317 | 329 | 350 |
| **Turnover in thousands** | 106,184 | 110,554 | 133,688 | 140,000 | 153,900 | 179,300 |
| **Balance in thousands** | 65,592 | 72,748 | 84,998 | 102,500 | 101,800 | 111,900 |
| **Equity capital in thousands** | 45,870 | 48,226 | 52,175 | 56,600 | 63,200 | 72,000 |
| **Equity ratio****in %** | 70 | 66 | 61 | 55 | 62 | 64 |
| **Export share in %** | 98 | 97 | 97 | 98 | 98 | 98 |

**VIKING in brief**

VIKING was founded in 1981 in Kufstein and was able to continuously expand the production of its garden shredders. Three years after the founding of the company, VIKING began developing its own line of lawn mowers in 1984. In 1992, following incorporation into the STIHL Group, the company completely renewed its garden tool range.

Today, VIKING produces and sells lawn mowers, robotic mowers, ride-on mowers, garden shredders, tillers and scarifiers. With a current export share of approx. 98 percent, this specialist in lawn & garden equipment enjoys a presence in some 60 countries worldwide. Its major export markets are Germany, France, Benelux, Russia, Poland, United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden. With 350 employees, VIKING achieved a turnover of 179.3 million euros in 2014. The consistent development of high-quality products and good marketing techniques in collaboration with the STIHL Group has made VIKING a leading company in the lawn & garden equipment sector.

**Your contact for further questions:**

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