VIKING Annual Press Conference

VIKING Factory Premises, Langkampfen, Austria

##### Tuesday, 19 April 2016, 10.30 a.m.

###### **Renewed turnover growth for VIKING**

###### **Numerous innovations for the garden season**

**Your VIKING GmbH contacts:**

Dr. Peter Pretzsch, Managing Director

Josef Koller, Production and Market Supply Manager

Wolfgang Simmer, Sales and Marketing Manager

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**Further information material**

USB stick with press releases (texts of this press pack, photos + infographic)

VIKING news 2016

**A successful year for VIKING**

*Langkampfen/Kufstein, 19 April 2016*. VIKING GmbH looks back at a successful fiscal year 2015: The Tyrolean company has maintained the positive trend of recent years, increasing its **turnover** to 193.9 million euros. Compared to the previous year, this represents an increase of nearly eight percent. The positive trend in the company's development since 2010 is even more pronounced. Turnover increased by more than 75 percent (from 110.5 to 193.9 million euros). The **balance sheet total** is also up. With an increase of more than 11 percent or nearly 13 million euros, the gardening power tool manufacturer achieved a balance sheet total of 124.6 million euros. The **equity ratio** grew to 65 percent in 2015.

The consistently high **export share** of 98 percent shows that the VIKING brand is strongly represented internationally and the machines produced in Langkampfen are highly valued in many countries. "We're delighted with the positive development within Austria and abroad. It proves that our commitment to our products pays and that we're on the right track with the premium strategy that we've decided to pursue," says a satisfied Peter Pretzsch, Managing Director of VIKING GmbH.

**Attractive regional employer**

With the positive trend in terms of business volume, the company's significance as an important employer within the Tyrolean lowlands region also increased. During 2014, VIKING still employed 350 personnel; this figure has today increased to 373 **employees** – including nine trainees. VIKING awards high priority to apprenticeship training, which it offers in the following five areas: Mechatronics, Metal Technology, IT, Operating Logistics and Industrial Clerk training. VIKING's apprentice training activities were awarded the title «Excellent Tyrolean Training Company» by the Tyrolean Chamber of Commerce in December 2015. The company's position as a valuable employer is to be further consolidated through targeted strengthening of the team in Langkampfen – VIKING is currently looking to hire employees in a number of departments.

**VIKING is "inclusive"**

For the Tyrolean gardening power tool manufacturer, social responsibility also plays a significant role in terms of human resources. One particular focus is on so-called "inclusion", i.e. the appointment of people with disabilities and the associated equality of all employees within the company. VIKING places great emphasis on employing people with disabilities. The company is therefore particularly pleased with the "Wir sind inklusiv" (We are inclusive) award it received last year. This was bestowed to selected Tyrolean companies for the first time by the Ministry of Social Affairs and is aimed at recognising companies who take a stance with regard to social commitment.

**Battery-powered machines made in Tyrol**

The manufacture of modern and environmentally friendly **battery-powered machines** for the German parent company STIHL has for some years now been a permanent feature of production in Langkampfen. Today, it is not only a wide variety of VIKING battery-powered lawn mowers which are produced in Tyrol, but also the STIHL battery-powered models. These include motorised saws, hedge trimmers and cutters, brushcutters, clearing saws, blower units, vacuum shredders, pole pruners, angle grinders and olive harvesters. The manufacture of these diverse products contributes significantly to capacity utilisation at the plant, as well as to long-term job security. "For us, the expansion and further development of the production of battery-powered machines is a sign of the great trust that our parent company STIHL places in our employees at the Tyrolean location," explains Josef Koller, Authorised Representative and Production and Market Supply Manager at VIKING regarding the strategic significance of battery production. The STIHL battery-powered products account for a significant share of the impressive growth of VIKING, which is delighted to be able to manufacture these products for the global market.

**iMow – the new generation**

Since the market introduction of the multiple award-winning **iMow** robotic mower series, the range of these manoeuvrable VIKING garden helpers has developed impressively. The two new MI 4 models, the iMow MI 422 and the iMow MI 422 P, are especially well suited for small and medium-sized lawns. Whereas the iMow MI 422 excels when mowing lawns up to 500 square metres, equipped with a slightly more powerful battery, the MI 422 P can even handle lawns up to 1,000 square metres. Fast and fully automatic, the robotic mowers can even cope in gardens with lots of corners and negotiate inclines of up to 40 percent.

The new iMow app, which has been developed for the two new MI 632 C and MI 632 PC models, provides even greater convenience and flexibility. The “C” stands for “Communication” – and the name says it all. The app enables the iMow to be networked with a smartphone or tablet in order to control the robotic mower even more flexibly. Thus, for example, the mowing process can be monitored continuously and the condition of the machine checked from a smartphone. Thanks to the integrated GPS module, the app user knows the current location of the iMow during mowing. In this way, the robotic mower can be used in a targeted manner within an area that especially requires cutting at the moment, avoiding parts of the garden that you currently want to make use of.

In addition to all the convenience features, safety and entertainment are also catered for. The iMow app, for example, automatically notifies the user if the machine gets stuck on a stone, the blades need to be replaced or the next service appointment is due. The built-in "Showtime" feature is responsible for entertainment. Under this menu item, the user can, for example, obtain up-to-date information on the performance and distance travelled by the iMow in appealing graphics. The user-friendly application is available in 25 languages and is available for the Android, iOS and Windows operating systems.

**Product innovations for the gardening season**

Innovation and quality are the two main characteristics when it comes to product innovations from VIKING. Year for year, the Tyrolean company invests in research and development in order to design its product range in the gardening power tool sector to be even better and more efficient. VIKING again has a number of new products for the current gardening season.

The **4 Series lawn mowers** are not only particularly flexible in terms of drive types and equipment, they combine particularly easy handling with the latest technology in order to deliver more pleasure and ease during mowing. New to the Series is the MB 448 VC, equipped with the award-winning mono-comfort handlebar, continuously variable Vario drive and the practical easy-start system.

The MB 545 VE ensures smart starting. Thanks to modern electronics, the new **5 Series lawn mower** starts at the push of a button. Responsible for this are long-life lithium-ion batteries, which enable at least 50 comfortable starts per charge and, once depleted, are ready for use again after only ten minutes thanks to the quick charge function. The new MB 545 VE shares all of its other benefits with the other 5 Series models.

Professionals have long relied on the VIKING **7 Series lawn mowers**. These machines have been developed specifically for professional use and operate reliably even under the most difficult conditions. In addition to the two models with hydrostatic drive – the MB 756 YS and MB 756 YC – the new MB 756 GS with a powerful 3-speed drive unit is now available. Its petrol engine is high-torque, smooth-running and durable. Thanks to its cutting width of 54 centimetres, it can be used to mow lawns up to 3,000 square metres.

The MB 4 RV is the latest **R Series mulching mower** from VIKING. Mulch mowing is particularly efficient and ecological because three tasks are performed in one: the grass is cut, the clippings are finely shredded and then evenly spread onto the turf. This dispenses with trips to the compost heap to empty the grass catcher box and the lawn is automatically fertilised through mulching, which improves the soil quality over time.

In the area of **garden shredders**, there are two innovations with the GE 135 L and the GE 140 L. Both of these electric shredders operate with a blade roller, which crushes the organic material and reduces it to fibres rather than shredding it in the conventional sense – this method not only benefits composting, the noise levels are also significantly reduced.

**Successful in Europe**

As a strong retail brand, VIKING products are not only appreciated on the Austrian market, the Tyrolean gardening power tool manufacturer also had a successful year at the European level. Although the lawn mower market has stabilised at a high level, significant successes have been achieved with the robotic mowers – VIKING growth here is measured in the double-digit percentage range.

Through the development of connected products, the market volume in the robotic mower segment is set to grow further in the coming years. These are machines which communicate intelligently with tablets or smartphones. The VIKING pioneers here are the two new iMow models, the MI 632 C and MI 632 PC. These can be controlled using the iMow app and provide valuable feedback to the user, ensuring even greater convenience and safety during operation.

**Several awards and a world record**

It is always especially pleasing when the quality, design or simple operation of a product is honoured by an international panel of judges. In this regard, VIKING looks back at a long list of awards and prizes, which has been supplemented with several entries in 2015. The 7 Series lawn mowers and the HB 585 tiller received the "Good Design Award", one of the biggest, longest-standing and most important design prizes in the industry. The professional 7 Series mowers also obtained the renowned "reddot award" last year. Moreover, all the VIKING lawn mowers featuring the mono-comfort handlebar were recognised in the three categories of the "Plus X Award": "high quality", "ease of use" and "functionality". VIKING Sales & Marketing Manager Wolfgang Simmer explains: "Traditionally, we have been fortunate enough to do well with the VIKING brand in design awards, but also in comparative consumer tests.“

In November last year, VIKING also had the pleasure of gaining a further honour: an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. Pekka Lundefaret from Norway accelerated a converted T6 Series lawn tractor to an unbelievable speed of 215 kilometres per hour – a world record. The fastest lawn tractor in the world will be on view at the Open Day on 17 September 2016 to mark the occasion of the 35-year anniversary of VIKING's foundation.

**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 brand of chain saws 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 and battery-powered products are produced in the plant in Langkampfen.

2015 was a successful fiscal year for the STIHL Group, with increased turnover worldwide.

**VIKING management team:**

Dr. Peter Pretzsch Managing Director

Wolfgang Simmer Sales & Marketing Manager

Josef Koller Production & Market Supply Manager

Michael Dickjürgens Purchasing Manager

Thilo Foersch Finance & Accounting Manager

Matthias Fleischer Product Development 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 Building extension for additional 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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** |
| **Employees** | 268 | 297 | 317 | 329 | 350 | 373 |
| **Turnover in thousands** | 110.554 | 133.688 | 140.000 | 153.900 | 179.300  |  193.934 |
| **Balance in thousands** | 72.748 | 84.998 | 102.500 | 101.800 | 111.900 | 124.668 |
| **Equity capital in thousands** | 48.226 | 52.175 | 56.600 | 63.200 | 72.000 | 81.400 |
| **Equity ratio****in %** | 66 | 61 | 55 | 62 | 64 | 65 |
| **Export share in %** | 97 | 97 | 98 | 98 | 98 | 98 |

**VIKING in brief**

VIKING was founded in 1981 in Kufstein, Austria, and succeeded in continuously expanding the production of its garden shredders. Three years after the founding of the company, VIKING created its own line of lawn mowers in 1984. In 1992, VIKING became a member of the STIHL Group and continuously launched state-of-the-art products on the market.

Today, VIKING produces and sells lawn mowers, robotic mowers, ride-on mowers, garden shredders, tillers and scarifiers as well as STIHL electric and battery-powered products. With a current export share of approx. 98 per cent, this gardening power tool specialist enjoys a presence in some 60 countries worldwide. Its major export markets are Germany, France, Benelux, Poland the United Kingdom. With 373 employees, VIKING achieved a turnover of 193.9 million euros in 2015. 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 gardening power tool sector.

**Your contact for further questions:**

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