VIKING Annual Press Conference

VIKING Factory Premises, Langkampfen, Austria

##### Wednesday, 25 April 2018, 10:30 am

###### **VIKING reports significant turnover growth in 2017**

###### **The appeal of the STIHL brand provides for**

###### **further growth and expansion in Langkampfen**

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

"VIKING GmbH 2018" form

**Renewed turnover growth for VIKING in 2017**

*Langkampfen/Kufstein, 25 April 2018*. VIKING GmbH has carried over the economic success from 2016 into the 2017 business year. The Tyrolean company increased its **turnover** by 43 percent to 381 million euros. 480 staff were employed by the innovative gardening power tool manufacturer during the previous year, representing a moderate growth of 16 percent compared with the annual average in 2016, in keeping with the business trend. The **balance sheet total** increased once again in 2017, rising to 241 million euros. The **equity ratio** amounted to 49% in 2017.

The strong growth in turnover was mainly attributable to the STIHL battery-powered products, which have been produced in Langkampfen for several years now, as well as the lawn mowers, in particular the battery-powered lawn mowers and robotic mowers.

The consistently high **export share** of 98 percent shows that VIKING is firmly established in the European market. The markets in Germany, France, the Benelux countries, Poland, the United Kingdom and Norway were also the strongest purchasers in 2017.

Peter Pretzsch, Managing Director of VIKING GmbH, describes the situation: "The current figures demonstrate the strong growth in turnover, sales and production volume. A strong growth trend is exhibited by the STIHL battery-powered products in particular, but also by certain VIKING gardening power tools. We will continue this trend more vigorously with the forthcoming brand change in many markets and will further expand the Langkampfen site.“

**Appeal of the STIHL brand**

From 2019, parent company STIHL will integrate the VIKING brand and promote a single brand: STIHL. The brand change from VIKING to STIHL will bring numerous advantages: STIHL's international brand recognition and the associated strength of the brand increases the sales opportunities significantly, as well as opening the door to new markets. The VIKING brand has developed very well on the European market in recent years, but is poorly represented or not represented at all on other continents such as Asia and the Americas. Although the existing VIKING markets will remain the top priority, the brand change will open up a global sales perspective in the medium term for the formerly green range. This will create clear growth opportunities for the product range, which will strengthen the location in Langkampfen.

The adaptation of all products is associated with a high level of effort in all company departments. In addition to the introduction of the machines in orange, the market supply and the provision of spare parts for the VIKING products will be ensured for a period of at least ten years. From the second half of 2018, the entire production will be converted to orange.

The sale of the battery-powered lawn mowers under the STIHL brand began back in early 2018. Owing to the association with other battery-powered products through the multiple use of the battery, the introduction of this product group made sense for the 2018 gardening season. The availability of all the other products under the STIHL brand is planned for the 2019 season.

The Tyrolean company VIKING has belonged to the STIHL group since 1992. "The brand change will significantly strengthen the Langkampfen location. The pronounced growth in the production volume is thanks to the commitment of our employees – their energy will also importantly support the wide variety of activities relating to the brand change," says Pretzsch. The range will be retained and the products will remain virtually unchanged technically a result of the brand change. Service and warranty will also remain unchanged. "The STIHL and VIKING product portfolios complement each other perfectly. We always focus on the needs of our customers and enhance our products accordingly“, explains Pretzsch.

**100 new jobs in Langkampfen**

The successful trend over recent years also meant that production needed to be expanded. On 29 September 2017, the official ground-breaking ceremony for the extension building took place at the location in Langkampfen. For this purpose, the 16,000 m² of floorspace has been expanded and an additional 20,000 m2 of working area has been created. The STIHL Group has invested some 23 million euros in the extension. "This has allowed us to create a further 100 jobs in Langkampfen," explains VIKING production and construction project manager Josef Koller.

With the extension building, VIKING is undertaking the largest investment in its company history. In addition to the STIHL battery-powered products, the battery-powered lawn mowers produced in Langkampfen are also responsible for the great business success. Production is being increased significantly. Furthermore, new endurance testing rooms, electric labs and a modern training workshop are being created. A special highlight will be an automatic small parts warehouse according to the latest state of the art, which can process around 300 retrieval and storage operations per hour. The roof of the new building will be partially landscaped and used as a testing area.

Completion of the extension building is scheduled for the end of 2018. The new premises will enter into operation step-by-step. In 2019, some changes and adaptations will be made to the existing buildings, which will be converted to a new use. With the expansion in Langkampfen, parent company STIHL demonstrates a firm commitment to the Tyrol location.

**Model innovations – first lawn mower under the STIHL brand**

The Langkampfen-based company inaugurated this year's gardening season with a very special innovation. The brand change has already been completed for the battery-powered mowers. These gardening power tools have been available under the STIHL brand since the spring of 2018.

All seven **battery-powered mowers** featuring cutting widths from 33 to 46 centimetres, as well as a mulching mower in various equipment versions, will appear in powerful orange with immediate effect. With these models, STIHL is relying on the popular and practical modular battery system. The powerful lithium-ion batteries from the STIHL COMPACT and PRO battery systems also operate all the other gardening power tools featuring the respective battery systems. The battery powered mowers impress by virtue of their enhanced technology, high operating comfort and quiet, emission-free operation.

There are also attractive innovations in the existing VIKING gardening power tool range. One new product is the **VIKING LE 240** scarifier available at an attractive price/performance ratio. With this machine, lawns up to approx. 500 square metres can be scarified, or optionally combed or aerated. The lightweight, handy and electrically driven scarifier can be started at the press of a button and frees the lawn of moss and lawn thatch with seven sharp double blades. The air flow of the aerator roller transports the excess organic material directly into the large catcher bag. The LE 240 features a foldable handlebar and a practical carrying handle. The power cable attached to the switch-plug combination ensures safety during working.

VIKING is also continuing with the expansion of its high-end lawn mower range with two machines. The 6 Series has been extended with the **MB 650 VE** and **MB 655 RS**. With cutting widths of 48 and 53 cm, the petrol-powered mowers are suitable for lawns between 2,000 and 2,500 m2. The MB 650 VE facilitates operation by means of a convenient electric start at the press of a button. A further comfort feature is the Vario drive – the infinitely variable speed control makes mowing pleasant on a variety of terrains. The MB 655 RS is equipped for precise mowing and is equipped with a metal rear roller on the rear axle. The roller creates the famous stripe pattern which for many is synonymous with the English lawn.

The **new MI 422 PC robotic mower** can be controlled digitally by means of a mobile command centre, the free iMow app. The machine can be programmed, organised and monitored via the app. Thanks to the intuitive user interface, the mowing plan can be updated, the mowing duration regulated and the mower located in just a few clicks. The app provides additional convenience and even greater reliability as it reports the operating state and any pending maintenance.

**VIKING – a multiple award-winning employer**

On 30 October 2017, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Industry named VIKING a **Nationally Recognised Training Enterprise**. This prestigious award is bestowed upon companies that have made a contribution to Austrian industry through outstanding achievements in the training of apprentices and in apprenticeships. VIKING impresses with extracurricular apprenticeship training, social commitment, good results in final examinations and apprentice competitions as well as external teaching collaborations and is entitled as an honour to use the Coat of Arms of Austria.

On 14 November 2017, VIKING came top in Austria in the Industry category in the **Best Recruiters Study** 2017/18. This renowned study, the largest within the German-speaking countries, looks at companies' interactions with job applicants. Among other aspects, the career websites and online job ads of the companies are examined. "The award confirms that we are on the right track with our recruitment strategy. Our aim is that each of our applicants – irrespective of the outcome of the application – has a positive memory of VIKING," say the delighted VIKING representatives.

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

Since 1992, VIKING has been a 100 %-subsidiary of the STIHL Group, a family-owned company with the head office in Waiblingen, Germany. STIHL has been the world’s most sold chain saw brand since 1971. The two STIHL Group brands – STIHL and VIKING – complement each other perfectly in terms of products, and benefit from this synergy. The brand change from VIKING to STIHL will take place in 2019.

For the STIHL Group the 2017 fiscal year was a successful one. Turnover, sales and staffing levels have never been so high.

**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 & 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 Second extension of the plant for additional usable floorspace

2018 Third plant expansion

**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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |  **2015 2016**  | **2017** |
| **Employees** | 317 | 329 | 350 |  373 414 | 480 |
| **Turnover in thousands €** | 140.000 | 153.900 | 179.300 |  193.934 266.995 | 381.871 |
| **Balance in thousands €** | 102.500 | 101.800 | 111.900 |  124.668 167.156 | 241.272 |
| **Equity capital in thousands** | 56.600 | 63.200 | 72.000 |  81.400 100.394 | 117.544 |
| **Equity ratio****in %** | 55 | 62 | 64 |  65 60 | 49 |
| **Export share in %** | 98 | 98 | 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 percent, this gardening power tool specialist enjoys a presence in some 70 countries worldwide. Its major export markets are Germany, France, the Benelux countries, Poland the United Kingdom. With 480 employees, VIKING achieved a turnover of 381.9 million euros in 2017. The consistent enhancement 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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