VIKING Annual Press Conference

VIKING Factory Premises, Langkampfen, Austria

##### Thursday, 20 April 2017, 10:30 am

###### **VIKING reports significant turnover growth**

###### **STIHL battery-powered machines and VIKING robotic mowers record strong growth**

**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 2017

**VIKING delivers a positive summary**

*Langkampfen/Kufstein, 20 April 2017*. VIKING GmbH had a successful business year 2016. The Tyrolean company increased its **turnover** by 37.6 per cent to 267 million euros. 414 people were employed by the innovative gardening power tool manufacturer last year, representing an increase of 11 per cent compared with the annual average in 2015. The **balance sheet total** increased once again in 2016, rising to 167 million euros. The **equity ratio** amounted to 60% in 2016.

The consistently high **export share** of 98 per cent 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 the strongest performers.

The multiple award-winning iMow robotic mower series has in recent years transformed from a lifestyle product into a revenue driver and made a significant contribution to turnover growth in 2016. Demand for **STIHL battery-powered products,** which are manufactured in Langkampfen, increased significantly once again and had a positive impact on total revenue.

Peter Pretzsch, Managing Director of VIKING GmbH, is very satisfied: "Based on our current successful track record we see a strong growth trend in the battery-powered product business and are well positioned with our gardening power tools. Through the brand change in the medium term we intend to exploit international further growth potential."

**VIKING green to become STIHL orange**

The main reasons for the brand change from VIKING to STIHL in 2019 are strong brand recognition as well as the associated appeal of the STIHL brand, even though the comparatively young VIKING brand has developed extremely well in recent years.

The VIKING brand is well established primarily in the European market, but it is almost unknown on other continents such as North America and Asia. 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 new growth opportunities for the range and these new paths will help to strengthen the production location in Langkampfen. The change from green to orange and the growing demand for products from the STIHL battery-powered range are expected to drive further growth. VIKING has experienced employees and vast know-how in the development and production of lawn mowers, robotic mowers, scarifiers, shredders and tillers. The location has also been successfully producing the STIHL battery-powered products for many years.

The decision to change the brand was certainly not one taken lightly. "The plant in Langkampfen is successful thanks to the dedication and commitment to the company shown by our employees and their significant investment in the VIKING brand in recent years. We can guarantee that no one in Langkampfen will lose their job as a result of the brand change. On the contrary, with this decision we are investing in the future of the location and making it even stronger," says Pretzsch. Langkampfen is and will remain the lawn mower competence centre of the STIHL Group.

The range will be retained and the products will remain technically unchanged as a result of the brand change. Service and warranty will also remain unchanged. "The STIHL and VIKING product portfolios complement each other perfectly. We continuously adapt our range in line with customer requirements and develop our products," emphasises Pretzsch. From 2019, the VIKING product range will be sold exclusively under the STIHL brand, and the changeover process is already underway. The Austrian company has been a member of the STIHL Group since 1992.

**Sustainable and efficient – innovations and new products**

As this year's gardening season gets underway, VIKING has once again delivered a number of new innovations.

The lawn mowers of the **completely new 6 Series generation** are true all-rounders. Discerning and semi-professional users will also love these machines. The mowers are designed for up to 2,500 square metres and have cutting widths of 48 and 53 centimetres. They are characterised by high performance and can easily handle difficult conditions. The high-end 6 Series mowers are reliable and comfortable to guide.

All models have a mono comfort handlebar, which allows for effortless emptying and attaching of the grass catcher box.

The 6 Series lawn mowers are also known for their robustness and durability – for example in the mower housing, which is made from a high-grade aluminium alloy. It is lightweight, yet extremely strong. This makes it more resistant to impact. Apart from the different cutting widths, the six mowers have specific differences for meeting high standards. For example, the **MB 650 VS**, **MB 655 VS** and **MB 655 YS** models are also equipped with a blade brake clutch (BBC) with integrated crankshaft protection.

The latest addition to the modern and environmentally friendly range of **battery-powered mowers** is the **MA 235**. It promises maximum flexibility and convenience for owners of gardens measuring up to around 200 square metres. At just 14 kilograms, the machine is both manoeuvrable and flexible. Users are thus ideally equipped, even in confined spaces. The height of the ergonomically designed handlebar can be adjusted in two steps in order to prevent back strain. The MA 235 combines advanced, efficient battery technology from STIHL with the function and convenience of the mower. It is sure to be of interest to anyone who is inspired by new trends, values independence and embraces new technology. The batteries can be used in all machines featuring the **STIHL COMPACT battery system**, including hedge trimmers, brushcutters, motorised saws and blower units.

STIHL battery-powered and electric machines made in Langkampfen got off to a flying start in 2016 and there are numerous innovations on offer this season as well. Examples include the new STIHL **FSA 130** **battery-powered brushcutter** and the new STIHL **HSA 94 R** **hedge trimmer**, both of which are produced in Langkampfen.

The manufacture of modern and sustainable battery-powered machines for the STIHL Group has for some years now been a permanent feature of production in Langkampfen and one of the main reasons for the company's successful development. Electric versions of a number of products will continue to be produced in Langkampfen.

**Awards from the home of the garden**

England is known around the world for its many beautiful gardens. As an important contributor to the maintenance of these gardens, VIKING is delighted to have received two awards from British magazines. The ME 235 electric mower was voted "Best Buy" in "**BBC Gardeners´ World Magazine**", while the MA 339 battery-powered lawn mower was voted "Best Buy" by renowned consumer magazine "**Which?**".

German magazine **Stiftung Warentest** selected VIKING as a test winner in April 2017. In a test of 11 battery-powered lawn mowers, the MA 339 C won with a grade of GOOD (2.0).

"As a successful gardening power tool manufacturer we have no need to fear comparison. This is evident from our many awards, the most recent of which is first place in the battery-powered lawn mower test conducted by Stiftung Warentest. It gives us great pleasure to see our innovative and successful products receive such recognition," says Wolfgang Simmer, Sales & Marketing Manager.

Wolfgang Simmer was recently elected President of the **EGMF**, a position which he will hold for the next two years. The EGMF – the European Garden Machinery Federation – is the association of leading European garden, landscaping, forestry and turf equipment manufacturers. VIKING has for many years been a committed member of the Brussels-based organisation. The mission of the EGMF is to act as a spokesperson for its members on pan-European matters. "Our joint efforts should also benefit the consumer, as it will mean more transparent product comparisons, for example. It is also about working to develop the highest standards in quality, safety, ergonomics, environmental compatibility and resource efficiency in the manufacture of products," says Simmer.

**VIKING is "klimaaktiv"**

Respect for the environment in how we act and work is a tradition at VIKING. For many years VIKING has been implementing a proactive environmental policy and pursuing sustainability strategies. We successfully completed certification of our environmental management system to the international standard ISO 14001 some time ago. Now we have added another official endorsement – VIKING has been entitled to use the title **"klimaaktiv"** since the end of last year. This distinction was awarded by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, and confirms that our efforts in this area are having an impact. By switching over to LED lighting in large sections of the company, VIKING saves 100 tonnes of CO₂ each year, thus contributing to climate protection. VIKING has "voluntarily signed up to identify and implement other energy-efficiency measures in the coming years," says Josef Koller, Production and Market Supply Manager.

VIKING also takes its social responsibilities towards its employees very seriously. To promote health and wellbeing in the workplace, the company recently opened a fully equipped fitness room, which is proving very popular with employees at the end of the working day.

**Open day featuring the fastest lawn mower in the world**

In the autumn of 2016, VIKING opened the doors to its factory premises for an informative and entertaining day. Last September, the gardening power tool manufacturer held an open day. Around 2,500 visitors used to opportunity to learn more about VIKING in a varied programme of events. There were factory tours, a comprehensive product show and insights into the world of testing, with great interest in the innovations by VIKING.

The highlight of the day for many visitors was the fastest lawn mower in the world with driver Pekka Lundefaret, who currently holds the world record for a speed of 215 km/h (134 mph). The Norwegian started up the modified VIKING lawn tractor every hour, and also completed a number of short trips.

**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 two STIHL Group brands – STIHL and VIKING – complement each other perfectly in terms of products, and can thus exploit synergy effects. The brand change from VIKING to STIHL is planned for 2019.

2016 was a successful fiscal year for the STIHL Group, with turnover growth worldwide driven by a significant increase in sales.

**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 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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015 2016** | |
| **Employees** | 297 | 317 | 329 | 350 | 373 414 | |
| **Turnover in thousands** | 133,688 | 140,000 | 153,900 | 179,300 | 193,934 | 266,995 |
| **Balance in thousands** | 84,998 | 102,500 | 101,800 | 111,900 | 124,668 167,156 | |
| **Equity capital in thousands** | 52,175 | 56,600 | 63,200 | 72,000 | 81,400 100,394 | |
| **Equity ratio**  **in %** | 61 | 55 | 62 | 64 | 65 60 | |
| **Export share in %** | 97 | 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 per cent, this gardening power tool specialist enjoys a presence in some 70 countries worldwide. Its major export markets are Germany, France, the Benelux countries, the United Kingdom and Spain. With 414 employees, VIKING achieved a turnover of 266.9 million euros in 2016. 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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