



Dear President Glen McNeil,  
Dear Co-chairs Brian Leach and Pascal Lemire,  
Dear Ann Louise Carson,  
Ladies and Gentleman,  
Dear friends of the Holstein breed from all over the world!

It is my great pleasure to welcome so many delegates, representatives of the fellow breeding organizations and enthusiastic Holstein breeders to this hall of the Westin Harbour Hotel, Toronto. This numbers (592 participants from 43 countries) confirms to us your interest in this conference and the importance of the work of the World Holstein-Friesian Federation. Exactly 4 years ago, we held the last World Conference in Killarney, Ireland and overall, this is the 13<sup>th</sup> Holstein Conference and the number of participants has grown every time.

Especially, I also want to welcome the 46 delegates of Young Breeders from 8 different countries. For the first time the Holstein Conference includes a World Youth Conference. I congratulate Holstein Canada for having this great idea. It is important to include today's youth in our discussions and provide them with opportunities to gain the necessary experience and skills to be successful leaders of tomorrow. Not only is the development of our breed but also the education of the youth, an investment into the future of our associations and WHFF!

This Federation is still relatively young; it was officially established in Budapest just 20 years ago. But in this short time, WHFF contributed greatly to the standardisation process, the harmonisation of data collection, the mutual exchange of information and to the further development of the Holstein breed. The work of WHFF was always of great help for ICAR and Interbull to further harmonize technical aspects or standardize data collection across breeds. So, Holsteins have evolved into the world's most important dairy breed and has taken leadership in many areas. In order to meet this demand we are still encouraged to actively design the future development and management of cattle breeding.

This year's conference is themed "Holsteins Today for a Better Tomorrow." It describes very well that we want to further develop the Holstein cow. Therefore, we need to assess the conditions and make forecasts, where does the future development go to. The recent years have shown us impressively how fast development can be. When we conducted the 2008 World Conference in Killarney, we were at the very beginning of the genomic era. The influences of genomic selection could not have been foreseen at that time. Today, we already talk about "The Genomic revolution" and "The Impact of Genomics on the Industry". We realize that the general conditions have become different. Breeding has accelerated and has become much more intense.

The speed with which genomics has influenced the whole cattle breeding sector has created new challenges. Genomic selection has affected the entire breeding system and it will fundamentally change the current breeding structures. Today, we don't know answers to the questions:

- What will be the future role of the breeder?
- Is there a demand for a wide participation in breeding like we have it today? Or
- Will cattle breeding become commercialized and centralized like pig and poultry breeding?

We have to be prepared and we need to actively participate in this development. In this regard, the conference, the topics and the discussion can be and should be a helpful support.

In this regard, WHFF meetings and conferences have a special importance. This conference provides beside Genomics a wide variety of topics on current issues around the Holstein breed such as reproduction and health. Even if the general breeding goals has moved more into the direction of functional and fitness traits we must go further in that direction to breed a long lasting, healthy and problem free Holstein cow. Cross breeding is not the answer, the answer is: use the best genetics within our breed to improve the fitness traits. Our breed has large variation and we should use the advantage of our global breed to convince those who believe that an improvement of fitness traits only can be achieved by cross breeding.

Genomics as new technology should help us to improve traits like fertility, health and fitness. We will discuss these important issues during the conference and I have no doubt that it will stimulate further progress.

But this conference will not only be the driving force behind the on-going development of the breed. It will also stimulate social interaction and exchange of ideas within our community. May this conference also promote the mutual understanding between the people involved and built new friendships, to help solve the task ahead in Holstein breeding?

In this respect, I welcome the delegates of 10 new members who have joined WHFF since our last conference four years ago. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

In behalf of the WHFF Council I would like to give special thanks to the board, management and staff of Holstein Canada for their tremendous work in preparing this event. Everything is very well arranged and the team of Holstein Canada have established perfect conditions for the 13th World Holstein Conference.

I also thank all the speakers for their contribution to this meeting.

And finally, thanks to you all for attending the 13<sup>th</sup> World Holstein-Friesian Conference in Toronto/Canada. May this conference be successful and a further milestone in the history of WHFF.

Egbert Feddersen, WHFF President

*(Opening Address held on the 13th World Holstein-Friesian Conference 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012)*