

# Queen Margrethe II's birthday

## After 150 years of friendship, the best is still to come

Freddy Svane  
AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK

Today, we celebrate the birth of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark. Denmark is home to the second-oldest monarchy in the world — the oldest is Japan. Denmark is among the few EU countries that can present decades of trade surplus with Japan, driven by agricultural commodities, which account for 38 percent of the total exports from Denmark to Japan. More than 25 percent of the frozen pork Japan imports is Danish.

This position has not been reached overnight — behind lies decades of strong commitment to ensure the very highest food safety and quality. These values and qualities are in high demand among Japa-



Queen Margrethe II of Denmark celebrates her 76th birthday. EMBASSY OF DENMARK

nese consumers. Though, in a world of free trade agreements, safety and quality alone does not do it. The Danish agricultural sector has placed great importance on competitiveness and as a result Denmark produces enough food products to feed

the Danish population three times over, and exports to 210 countries and regions around the world.

Denmark leads the world in another area — organics. With 8 percent, Denmark has the world's highest market share of organic food and beverages. Danes buy organic products not only because they are safe, healthy and tasty, but also for environmental reasons. Organic food is a trend that has been growing in Japan as well, and I am convinced Japanese people will demand more organic products in the future.

In 2017, Japan and Denmark will celebrate their 150th anniversary of diplomatic ties. The anniversary is of great importance to the already close and friendly relationship between our countries. Over the past 150 years Denmark and Japan have collaborated in numerous ways. In 1957, Scandinavian Airlines System opened the first direct route above the North Pole, cutting travel time

to Europe by eight hours, and Toyota introduced their cars in Denmark 1964 as their entry to Europe. In more recent years several major Japanese companies have introduced their robots in Denmark, using Denmark as a gateway to Europe the same way Toyota did. The anniversary next year will bolster the good relationship and, most importantly, take it into the future for the benefit and prosperity of both Denmark and Japan.

Japan and Denmark are both aging societies and this is a both big challenge and an opportunity. Sometimes challenges are needed to spark change — changes for the better. This challenge offers the possibility to aid in striving for a society that offers equal opportunities to both genders. Gender equality is high on the agenda of the G-7 summit that will be hosted by Japan in May, and I hope it can be a push in the right direction. Denmark was recently award-

ed the Gender Equality Flag as part of the U.N.'s Sustainable Developments Goals in recognition of Danish efforts in this area. Denmark stands ready to work with Japan on gender equality as well.

I wish Her Majesty a happy birthday and I wish the close friendship between the Danish royal family and the Japanese Imperial family will inspire people to join the 150th anniversary celebrations in 2017.



H.R.H. Crown Princess Mary hoists the gender equality flag in Copenhagen. EMBASSY OF DENMARK

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