

Paavo Mäkinen - 2011

M.S. in Agricultural Economics, Purdue University

Deputy Head
European Commission Representation in Finland
Guiding Historical Change

Paavo Mäkinen finds the term “diplomat,” as applied to his career, “a bit flattering.” In his current role with the European Commission, he calls himself a generalist who focuses on communications. But his impact on Finland’s integration into the global economy makes a compelling case that he is indeed his country’s foremost agricultural diplomat.

His did not have a rural upbringing; he grew up near Helsinki, with a few years spent in Sydney, Australia. His decision to study agriculture came about “mainly [because] I knew nothing about it,” he says.

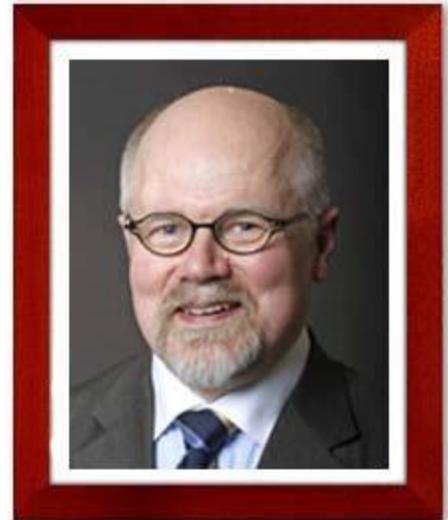
Such curiosity led him to Purdue on a Fulbright Scholarship. His doctoral thesis at the University of Helsinki — on the effects of various agricultural policies on agricultural structures — was the foundation for his subsequent service to Finnish and international agriculture.

In 1991, he was asked to draft the chapter on agriculture for the Finnish government’s report on possible membership in the European Union (EU). During this time Finnish agriculture would transition from a highly protected industry that served broad consumer needs in a country of 5 million people, to a more specialized, internationally competitive sector. The historic negotiations were both challenging and personally satisfying, as Mäkinen worked to educate farmers and the public in Finland about their new role in the EU, which the nation joined in 1995.

The EU tapped him to head its unit responsible for international relations in agriculture with Asia, Oceania, Africa, and Latin America. He then returned to Finland to lead the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, where he bridged Finnish farmers and the changing international environment.

He has represented the EU in Finland since 2005 and expects to return to Brussels in September 2011 in a new role relating to international agriculture policy.

While at Purdue, Mäkinen joined the choir of a small Lutheran church in Lafayette, and he and his wife remain enthusiastic singers. Major choral pieces — think Handel’s *Messiah* — “make you forget your daily troubles,” the baritone says.



1981-1987 Research Assistant, Economics Research Institute, Helsinki, Finland
 1982 Master of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Helsinki
 1985 M.S., Agricultural Economics, Purdue University
 1987-1992 Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Head of Unit, National Board of
 Agriculture
 1989-1991 Administrator, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 1990 Doctoral degree, Agriculture and Forestry (Agricultural Economics), University
 of Helsinki
 1992-1993 Commercial Councillor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Helsinki, Finland
 1993-1996 Special Councillor, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Helsinki, Finland
 1996-1997 European Commission, Head of Unit, international relations in agriculture with
 Asia, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas (excluding U.S.A.)
 1997-2005 Secretary General, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners
 (MTK), Helsinki, Finland
 2005-present European Commission, Head of Sector, 2005-present Suppleant of Head of
 Representation, July 2005-June 2006, October 2007-present

“Purdue was a very rigorous school, which I enjoyed thoroughly. What I remember enjoying the most was interdepartmental lunches held every Thursday among the faculty and post-graduate students. Each time a different member of the faculty presented their ongoing study. It was a high level of discussion and debate.”