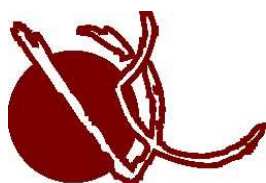


EurSafe News

European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics



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Editorial

Dear EurSafe Members,

It is a pleasure to introduce you the September Newsletter. The topic of this issue is “Food Safety and Food Security”.

World-wide, around 852 million men, women and children are chronically hungry and more than 2 billion people intermittently know food scarcity. Food security is a right, but it is not sure we are able to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015. What could be done and what has not to be done in order to be able to have adequate food for every human being? Is modern agriculture and its industrialization helping the process of food accessibility? Which role can Europe play for food security in the world? Which discipline of science can potentially improve the situation and should be adequately funded?

Food safety is considered an issue pertaining to rich countries, but it is not. The globalization process has shown that the solutions to the dilemmas connected to the safety concept cannot be found within our boundaries.

Strict rules on mycotoxins contamination introduced by Europe cause economic loss to Africa, slowing its commercial development and indirectly the death of many people due to poverty. At the same time, for example, over 95% of Guinean children have high levels of aflatoxin in their blood that together with HBV lead to the highest percentage of liver cancer during adolescence and adulthood in the world.

The EU has introduced legislation on safe production of cheese and other milk products limiting the use of raw milk for cheese manufacturing. The request for higher safety standards is deleting a fascinating and traditional gastronomic culture as stated by the Slow Food Manifesto in Defense of Raw Milk Cheese.

An Italian consumer association recently tested organic and conventional industrial products of a typical Italian breakfast and noticed the BIO (organic) certification of many of the analyzed products did not change the quality of the product much, while considerably affecting the price. In this case the label “organic product” (BIO) does not mean “healthier”.

These examples show how complex the themes connected to safety are and how legal, economic, scientific, political and moral issues are intertwined.

Can we partially sacrifice food safety to guarantee food security; in other words is safety of food a right or a privilege? Are safety and plurality of food choices inconceivable? Can safety and tradition coexist? To what extent? Can the private sector regulate and certify labels for food safety? Is information on food transparent?

To address some of these questions four authors contributed to this issue. They were able to complement each other with their expertise on the theme of safety and security suggesting their viewpoint on food and agriculture.

Korthals challenges us to think about the direction of today’s agriculture, about the connection of food research with food industry and about what can be done to keep a fair process of deliberation on food issues.

Adcock describes the debated issue of compatibility of security and safety, with special attention for the African case, stressing the central role that the European regulatory process can have in facilitating food security in Africa.

Morris analyses the European regulation on GM products showing how risk evaluation criteria can be modeled according to the political agenda.

Zimdahl looks at the American agriculture with a “European perspective” challenging scientists to take a proactive role in order to address ethical issues in food production.

In the following pages you will also find information on the recently funded Nordic Network of Agriculture and Food Ethics, news from the EU, and, as always, the overview of interesting conferences and funding calls.

The EurSafe News' December issue will be edited by our chief editor Stef Aerts. The theme will be “The state, future, and ethics of agricultural research”. All contributions, thematic or other, should be sent to Stefan.Aerts@biw.kuleuven.be before November 15, 2007.

Best wishes to you all from the editorial board,

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Thematic Section – ‘Food Safety and Food Security’

Food and agriculture: new catastrophes?

Michiel Korthals

Fundamental problems of current agriculture and agricultural policy

The take off of the new common European agriculture policies is underway, but it becomes clearer that European agriculture and food policies will not tackle the problems that many ethically concerned consumers identify as problems. In the Netherlands the policy of the new government is elaborated in a document called ‘Choice for agriculture’, however it is only a certain type of agriculture, the large scale, not ‘ground bound’ agriculture, that will profit from this policy, because it is stated that the trend toward large scale, global oriented agriculture is inevitable, and one should adapt oneself to it.

Many ethically concerned people see this differently. The mass media can not avoid confronting their clients with large scale culling due to epidemics because of large scale housing systems and we are constantly confronted with the huge problems of the current agriculture system. Movies like *Our daily bread*, *Darwin’s Nightmare*, *We feed the world*, and *Super Size Me* show the dark side of our food system, and that some of its worst problems are exported to the developing world.

Advertisements constantly address us with encouragements to eat the advertised healthy foods, but insiders know that most of these claims are sheer nonsense; this information is often

published in quality newspapers like *The Guardian* or *New York Times* but scarcely gets attention in mass newspapers. Moreover, public research on food is increasingly under pressure to find matching grants with industry research and a large scale survey has proven that industry is not interested in negative results on health with respect to its own food products. The public is bombarded by positive outcomes of what ever food product; well, even arsenic now and then has certain positive outcomes, so food research is indeed making itself more and more ridiculous.

In the meantime we are alarmed by the negative effects of the present fast-food system: cardiovascular diseases, diabetes type-2 and intestine cancers galore. A last, but not the least problem is that our health councils constantly recommend us to eat more fat fish like salmon and herring, but the seas are nearly emptied and due to large scale commercial fishing fish resources will be depleted in forty years over. Farmed salmon produces lots of environmental problems.

The new Common Agricultural Polity of the EU will increase these problems: it is not oriented towards health of the population and towards a sustainable environment. Recently, a NGO started a website publishing European agricultural subsidies (i.e. from those countries that indeed allow these subsidies to be public) and the Dutch amount of ca. 1,2 billion Euro (2005) is largely given to

companies that provide milk, corn, and sugar beet which due to their low prices are largely responsible for the increase in obesity. The new CAP will make the price of calories in rich food still cheaper. Some even fear that small scale farming becomes economically not profitable anymore and only large scale farming will be profitable. Large pig and chicken flats of twenty or more floors will destroy the landscape.

However, another trend can counteract these developments: the hunt for crops that can produce biofuels. Alarmed by forecasts on global changes in the weather private companies and governments try to show that they are doing their best to moderate the effects by taking action in producing biofuel-crops. In 2006, across the US, 20% of maize went to ethanol. Everywhere in the world the effect on agriculture of the biofuel hunt is felt by the doubling of the wheat, soy, and maize prices, until now. The 27 EU countries have decided that in 2020 20% less CO₂ will have to be produced and that biofuels will take a share of 10% in energy production. This again will cause a rise in prices of crops and also will produce pressure on agricultural plots. Although the current technologies of making energy out of crops are still producing CO₂ (according to estimations they use 0.2 to 0.9 litre fuel per litre biofuel) and the new energy policies are therefore misleading, they have devastating effects on the use of land and water and therefore on poor people in the South. This is a battle between motorists and hungry people. But the largest problems of climate change are not tackled: according to predictions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change rain-dependent agriculture (most in the South) could be

halved by 2020 as a result of climate change.

The core of these problems

The food system is in total disarray, and consumers in the West are informed in a chaotic and incoherent way. What to believe? Agricultural policies and markets have encouraged the emergence of large scale companies that produce without connections with nature and local communities. Cows, pigs and chickens are seen as factories that have to produce more milk, meat and eggs every year. Consumers are left with silly choices between food products with fat or with sugar and are excluded from the most important ones like quality of taste, environmental quality, animal welfare, global justice and landscape. Eating nothing is not really an option, because making meals and having meals together with people is one of the enjoyments of life. Should we eat less? Not if it implies eating less fruits and vegetables because they are mostly still locally produced and indeed one of the few plausible outcomes of the food sciences is still that they are healthy.

Changes in the current food system are only possible by close cooperation between conscientious producers and consumers in deliberations to bridge the gap between them. Alarmism and negativism already produced too much fatal mistakes. Long term policies should stimulate local agriculture that uses the land. They should also invest hugely in communication and education. Children should learn again that milk comes from a cow and not from a supermarket shelf and that taste is dependent on many conditions like the seasons, but not on

advertisements and on television personalities. In many surveys it turns out that at least two third of the consumers are concerned about food production, and although they have diverging interests and preferences, this should be a stimulus for food producers to search for their niches in ethical branding. We need independent branding certification that can be overseen by consumers. Internally companies can enhance their ethical policies by including consumers councils. Governments should give ethical farming and producing tax relief. Ethical firms could ask to spend one

tenth of the 40 billion dollar that now per year is spent to food advertisement, to these independent certificate systems.

Final question: can the new EurSafe board, which I welcome, make a difference?

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The European Union's Policy to Biotechnology and African Food Security.

Mike Adcock

Since the 1998 *de facto* moratorium on the commercialisation of GM crops, Europe has introduced a series of Directives and Regulations to cover all aspects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The regulatory framework covers the research level in the laboratory through to field trials, placing on the market, food and feed, labelling and traceability. The legislation may be viewed as being extremely comprehensive, while others have argued that it is in fact a classic case of over-regulation. Whatever your viewpoint it seems certain that much of the legislation has been implemented in response to public concerns over GMOs. Every GMO is reviewed on a case by case basis. It must pass a risk assessment of its impact on human health and the environment, undergo food safety assessments, meet the requirements of labelling based on the origin of the GMO rather than the presence of any

GM DNA or protein, and meet traceability requirements so that any product can be traced through the food chain, from farm to fork. The Commission points out that the regulatory system has been put in place to allay consumer fears and provide the consumer with choice. However, although there is a wide ranging regulatory system in place there is still a great divergence of opinions concerning GM crops and products between individual consumers and even between member states themselves. In a public opinion analysis carried out by the Commission in 2005, GM foods are still seen as risky, not morally acceptable, not useful and should not be encouraged. While the member states regulatory committee when voting on the authorisation of GMOs, invariably shows the UK, Spain and the Netherlands are amongst the supporters of the technology, while Greece, Austria

and Luxembourg are amongst the antagonists. However, while the debate in Europe goes on it is important to consider the wider implications.

In sub-Saharan Africa food security is of paramount importance. Food security as defined by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. Food security therefore impacts on such issues as health, poverty and the economy. To achieve food security requires a mix of ingredients including: available land, water, inputs, storage, supply, infrastructure, distribution, transport, access to markets, with the focus here being trade and biotechnology.

With respect to trade, it is widely accepted that open trade is more apt to guarantee food security than self-sufficiency in food production, which may be an unachievable goal. For sub-Saharan Africa trade with the EU is extremely important. Around 10% of the European Union’s import of agricultural products is from Africa, especially in the fruit and vegetable sector. Trade with the EU accounts for around 85% of all agricultural products exported from Africa.

With respect to biotechnology, the Nuffield Council on Bioethics in the UK released a report entitled “The use of genetically modified crops in developing countries” in 2003. The report states that GM crops could be a tremendous benefit to developing countries but each crop must not only be considered on a case by

case basis but also in comparison with other possible alternatives that could be taken to improve agriculture and food security. Any GM crop introduced must be appropriate to the needs of small scale farmers and the traits selected relevant to the environment. GM crops with traits such as salt tolerance, drought resistance and increased nutritional value could be beneficial to sub-Saharan African countries and allow substantial and sustainable improvements in agricultural productivity which are needed to improve food security. To date only South Africa is growing significant amounts of GM crops (1.4 million hectares in 2006).

It is clear that the European market is of great importance to sub-Saharan African countries, while biotechnology maybe an important component for food security. However, it can be argued that the EU policy towards GM crops and products is having an impact on the uptake and use of biotechnology in Sub-Saharan Africa and thus affecting food security. Therefore, sub-Saharan countries are perhaps faced with three choices: 1) Reject GM technology, 2) embrace GM and neglect sensitive markets, 3) segregate GM and non-GM crops and products for home and sensitive markets. The first choice may have long term effects on food security, the second choice the potential loss of the European market, while the third choice requires legislative action to produce a regulatory system with sufficient capacity and infrastructure. This choice therefore has major economic implications.

Can the EU play a role in promoting food security through biotechnology and still ensure a market for products from sub-Saharan countries? First, the EU

could go some way towards fulfilling its obligations under Article 66 of the TRIPs agreements by providing incentives to enterprises and institutions in their territories for the purpose of promoting and encouraging technology transfer. Second, the EU could offer assistance to developing countries in designing and implementing appropriate GM regulations, while clarifying their own policies, such as labelling, thereby enabling developing countries to meet these requirements. Third, the EU could assist in providing relevant infrastructure, especially with regards to separate supply chains for GM and non-GM products, thus ensuring future trade.

Food security is a complex issue with many different and diverse components, of which trade and biotechnology are

just two. However, it seems clear that the EU's policy towards GM crops and food is having an impact on the uptake of biotechnology in sub-Saharan Africa due at least in part to the implication this has on trade. The EU has a role to play in providing assistance to developing countries to facilitate the uptake of biotechnology while ensuring future trade. This may be one approach to the many different approaches required to achieve the ultimate goal of food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Food security and biopolitical risk management: a recipe for ethical concern?

Shane H. Morris

Food security is a growing problem both in the developing world and on the margins of the developed world due to increasing food prices. Innovative technology has in the past played an important role in securing the food supply and in the future technological applications will continue to play a role in providing options to farmers.

With all agriculture and food related technologies there are risks and benefits (e.g. rotenone use in organic food production, unintended effects in conventionally bred crops and gene flow concerns with genetic modification, etc). As a result the provision of regulations occurs as part of the risk management strategies applied to various technologies

or practices (e.g. mandatory glycoalkaloid testing of all new potato varieties)

Risks can be of many types and one should always ask what risk management is managing and why? Using GM technology as an example we can see that political risk is sometimes managed at the expense of other risk types. In the case of GM technology applied to plants risks are often categorized into the following areas: health, environment, socio-economic and ethical. However, as a result of a focused and targeted anti-gm campaign there now exists a 'biopolitical' risk to be calculated by legislators when regulating GM technology.

The example

One example of use of regulations to manage biopolitical risks over that of environment risk is portrayed by a speech by the EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, at the Freedom of Choice conference on genetically modified organism (GMO) co-existence on April 5, 2006.

In his speech Commissioner Dimas declared: "As an environment commissioner, I am keen to ensure that the environment is protected from potential risks arising from the cultivation of GMOs". He also added "GMO products raise a whole new series of possible risks to the environment, notably potential long term effects that could impact on biodiversity". He further proclaimed, "we should not ignore the use of "upgraded" conventional varieties as an alternative to GM crops, particularly where similar characteristics can be introduced without genetic modification".

Commissioner Dimas's comments raise several pertinent issues that remain unexplained in official EU documentation and go unexamined in the EU published literature, namely:

(i) Environmental risks associated with Dimas's so-called 'upgraded' varieties can exist and are often similar (if not often identical) from an ecological impact perspective to GM crops.

(ii) The EU regulatory framework under Directive 2001/18/EC currently fails to consider the potential environmental risks associated with upgraded, biotechnology-derived non-GM crop varieties and only considers products

derived from the process of genetic modification.

(iii) The EU Commission expects EU citizens to accept that it assesses potential (and much debated) environmental risks regarding GMOs by way of the precautionary principle enshrined in Directive 2001/18/EC. On the contrary, it expects EU citizens to accept the fact that EU regulations offer no precautionary regulatory oversight for a comparable environmental risk, simply because the risk is associated with another technology platform eliciting the same phenotypic (trait) outcome.

These questions become very obvious when one considers that BASF's non-GM herbicide-resistant (HR) 'CLEARFIELD' crops can be found growing unregulated across the EU. In Europe, these HR crops include rice, maize, oilseed rape and sunflowers, with wheat likely soon to follow. CLEARFIELD HR crop varieties have been created using mutagenesis and/or traditional breeding methods and are free of 'introduced' genetic material. Thus, they are not considered to be a genetically modified organism (GMO) by the EU (Brussels) and are not covered by Directive 2001/18/EC. Nevertheless, BASF itself has seen fit to develop a Grower Stewardship Plan to reduce the environmental risks that they claim could exist stating: "Management of herbicide-resistant weeds and gene flow from crops to weeds are issues that must be considered with the development of any herbicide-resistant crop. Thus, extensive stewardship programs have been developed to address these issues for CLEARFIELD crops".

For equivalent traits, the technology type chosen to obtain the expression of herbicide resistance does not have a direct bearing on the potential environmental risks. It is not suggested that the lack of risk differential should cause HR GM crops to forego EU regulatory oversight; however, it does suggest that, from a policy perspective, the EU should explain why non-GM upgraded HR crops are not being subjected to some form of environmental risk assessment in accordance with the precautionary principle and current EU policy, considering they have the same phenotypic traits as their GM counterparts. The current disparity in environmental risk assessment also leaves the EU open to the reverse question: if non-GM HR crops obtained through mutagenesis are currently cultivated without restriction, why is there an environmental need to regulate equivalent HR GM crops?

The policy

Commissioner Dimas's comments promoting upgraded (e.g., non-GM) HR crops runs contrary to the EU Commission's own guidelines on applying the precautionary principle in a consistent and nondiscriminatory manner. Directive 2001/18/EC, which uses the 'precautionary principle' as its basis to protect Europe's environment from the possible environmental risks of GM technology states: "In accordance with the precautionary principle, the objective of this Directive is to approximate the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States and to protect human health and the environment...".

However there is a strong argument for applying this same precautionary principle to non-GM 'upgraded' crops, especially if they express the same phenotypes as their GM counterparts. Such an argument is enhanced when considering the policy communiqué published by the EU Commission in 2000 setting out "the Commission's approach to using the precautionary principle" and establishing "Commission guidelines for applying it". These guidelines assert that the precautionary principle should be used in a proportional, nondiscriminatory and consistent manner with an examination of the benefits and costs of action (or lack of action) and with an examination of scientific developments. The principle of nondiscrimination denotes that similar risks should not be treated differently. This is clearly outlined: "Measures taken under the precautionary principle should be designed to achieve an equivalent level of protection without invoking the geographical origin or the nature of the production process to apply different treatments in an arbitrary manner".

The communiqué also declares, "measures should be consistent with measures already adopted in similar circumstances or using similar approaches." These preexisting EU Commission guidelines clearly show that EU Commissioner Dimas's unbridled support of 'upgraded' crops justified simply on 'the nature of the production process' is out of step with official EU policy.

The questions

Clear answers from the EU Commission are needed on the following two questions: first, does the EU Commission concede there are potential risks to the environment from so-called 'upgraded' crop lines and that a gap exists in the EU regulatory framework? Or alternatively, is there a 'biopolitical' attempt to ignore the potential risks and not subject these 'upgraded' products to a risk assessment contrary to the precautionary principle while arguably unfairly applying environmental regulation to phenotypically identical GM crops? To date both questions remain unanswered.

Conclusion

The examination of the EU's selective approach to managing the environmental risk associated with HR crops provides ample evidence that risk management strategies can be employed to regulate biopolitical risk. There are potential policy and ethical questions that are raised in the context of food security

when biopolitical risk is given higher priority than other risks. This needs to be acknowledged and debated. If the precautionary principle is perverted to become the preventative principle for the sake of political face-saving there could be serious consequences for all future technology applications relating to food security.

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed herein are strictly those of the author who is a citizen of the European Union. Shane Morris contributed to this article in his personal capacity. The views expressed are his own and do not represent those of his employer, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, or the Government of Canada.

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The Ethics of Food Safety and Security

Robert L. Zimdahl

The American food system faces moral dilemmas that do not involve easy choices between what is clearly ethically right and clearly wrong but between two alternatives, neither of which is all bad or good.

The results of choosing are often not easy to predict.

For example:

1. Should agricultural production be increased to feed more people, regardless of the environmental harm caused by the technology that creates the production?
2. Should production subsidies be continued or should consumption be subsidized so all can eat?

3. Should more or less food aid be given to developing countries?
4. Should agricultural biotechnology be accepted or rejected?
5. Should pesticide use in American agriculture be reduced even if yields decrease?

Each of these is a moral not just a scientific question.

Agriculture's *produce as much as possible ethic* has created a situation where many farmers produce a commodity to sell as cheap raw material to which some commercial entity adds value. The abundant commodities have helped to create an American society in which three of five are overweight, one in five is obese, yet many are undernourished.

The *produce as much as possible ethic* has reduced nature's vast biological complexity to managing carefully selected crops by controlling fertility, pests, and water. It is reductionistic science at its worst. When production has been reduced to a few, albeit very important variables, the natural tendency is to ignore everything else and to assume that what can be measured is all there is, or at least all that matters.

When agriculture is reduced to production of commodities it is just like any other business in which a product is sold to the highest bidder. Other considerations important to the greater society are ignored: public health, food and worker safety, equitable income distribution, the common good, and ecological well-being. The missing concept is an ethic of care.

We are not independent living things, surrounded by other living things that

are here for our benefit. We are part of a living system over which we have not been given dominion. We are charged to care. One could argue that we are morally obligated to care. We cannot continue to harm ecological and social communities and survive on the only planet we have. There is a strong trend toward becoming stewards whose goal is social and ecological sustainability not just economic success. It includes the wisdom of becoming participants who work with nature on the basis of equality and mutual survival. This demands a shift in the ethical view of nature from anthropocentric to ecocentric.

American agriculture is characterized by centralization, an absence of open markets, decision making by unknown officials, and techniques that harm the ecosystem. Twentieth century American agriculture saw continued yield increases, while farmers gained economically and consumers gained through lower food prices.

Many emphasize technological progress, food's low cost, and the overall efficiency of large-scale agriculture. This view dominates among commercial (large-scale) farmers, in agribusinesses, and land-grant universities. It contrasts with the eco-friendly, small farm view, which is skeptical of bigness and technology and worried about environmental and human health, chemicals, biotechnology, and domination by agribusiness. Those in the second camp criticize the first view for dismissing criticism too easily and paying too little attention to externalities, and harm to losers in the quest for profit. The first group is willing to spend billions of taxpayer dollars to support commercial agriculture and justifies

what agriculture has become with one word: efficiency.

The pressures today's farmers face: increase size to obtain market share and link with agribusiness to produce and market commodities, lead to industrial agriculture. One must ask if one of agriculture's problems is that while we speak of family farms and food and land quality, we don't really care? Do we care what shape and structure agriculture assumes, do we see a linkage between health of rural communities and the health of land and safety of food? Or is the price of food all we care about? Do we assume that someone will take care of the land because someone always has? Does the way agriculture is structured and managed matter? Do we care that farmers are becoming low wage employees on their own land?

An increasing number of people question the safety of their food and the ethics of the system that produces it. Creating an ethical standard for food safety and security requires considering and probably changing fundamental values. It requires caring about achieving democratically legitimate policies that consider deeply held moral values. The public observes agriculture carefully. People care about what they value and what they assume agriculture values.

Public opinion must be taken seriously. The public's view of agriculture and its technology is often one of tampering with nature that leads to bad results. This is based more on distrust of science than on misconceptions of scientific facts or on irrationality. The general public tends to be more risk averse than scientists. The question is not whether scientists are

better than they used to be. The question is, are they as good as they ought to be?

Scientists have their share of hubris because they have contributed to agriculture's productive success. Scientists know they are technically capable, and have assumed that increased production makes them morally correct. But it may be that it is only with humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it. The morally blameworthy act is disrespect for the limits of human capability, not just faulty prediction of the harmful consequences of our acts.

Science is an inherently evaluative activity. It is not value-free. If one examines the nature and methods of science one logically concludes that science and scientists are involved in questions of value. Science is committed to standards of right and wrong, and moves toward large social aims.

A judgment of value, merit, or worth is often thought of as subjective and biased. Many believe that the words *is* and *ought* belong to different worlds. The belief is that sentences constructed with *is* usually have verifiable meanings whereas sentences constructed with *ought* never have.

Science accumulates evidence that bears on judgments and increases the probability of statements to the point where they become true beyond a reasonable doubt. Scientists are never absolutely certain because there always is, or should be a healthy scientific skepticism that says: Criticism is always legitimate, no one has the final say, and no one has personal authority. Science would not be science if it could not make

and adequately support value/moral judgments—we ought to pursue transgenic technologies because they offer the best promise of feeding a growing world population, a good thing to do. Those who oppose this view are often labeled as uninformed or ignorant. The scientific dogma is not questioned. Science is an activity that evaluates means to ends and the ends, and makes moral judgments and claims about ultimate value. We need the best scientists and the best philosophers to justify the basic value positions of agriculture and to create an appropriate ethical standard.

The moral correctness of actions have always been important in agriculture but it has not been emphasized or given a dominant role in decision making in agricultural education, industry, or research. Agriculture has regularly raised “questions about values, priorities, practices, and policies” as said by Burkhardt and colleagues. Few decisions in agriculture are purely scientific or purely ethical. They are complex with scientific, economic, social, political, legal, and moral dimensions. All dimensions must receive proper attention. Ignoring the ethics of agriculture reflects the view that agricultural science is value-free and ethics are simply personal. Omitting ethics from our science reflects the once-dominant, but now largely discredited

view that values and value-judgments are inimical, or contrary, to the practice of science. It ignores the fact that the public observes agriculture and cares about what they assume its practitioners value.

In my opinion the idea that ethical reflection is essential to agriculture is unexplored within the American agricultural community. In the US, the questions posed at the beginning of this article and most questions about food safety or security are regarded as primarily scientific not moral questions. In the words of William James ethical reflection, similar to all new ideas, will pass through three phases. At first it is rejected as absurd. Second, where we are now, the idea is regarded as being true, but insignificant. Finally, the idea is seen as so important that its adversaries claim that they discovered it. The risk of being in the vanguard that develops an appropriate, defensible ethical position for agriculture is small. Try it, you might like it.

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News Section

A Nordic Network of Agriculture and Food Ethics is funded

A Nordic Network of Agriculture and Food Ethics (NordSafe) has received funding from NordForsk, an organization operating under the Nordic council of Ministers with the aim to facilitate cooperation among the Nordic countries in terms of research and research education. The funded project runs over three years and has received a total of 110.000 Euros for its activities. It involves the Nordic and Baltic countries as well as participants from Canada (University of British Columbia) and the United States (University of Alaska). 14 research groups are participating in the network. The network is chaired by Matthias Kaiser and administered by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology. Further board members are Vonne Lund, National Veterinary Institute, Norway; Helena Röcklinsberg, Lund University, Sweden; Anna Valros, Helsinki University, Finland; Mickey Gjerris, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; Andres Aland, Tartu University, Estonia; Siri Lervik, Norwegian School of Veterinary Science; Dan Weary, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada and Stine B. Christiansen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Background

During the last EurSafe conference in Oslo in 2006, a Nordic Society for Agriculture and Food Ethics was

established with Vonne Lund as the chairperson. The society decided to write an application for funding, which eventually was successful. We have experienced that there is a big need to further discuss and develop ethical food and agriculture issues and to create a meeting place for people with an interest in food and agriculture ethics in the Nordic countries. The common history and culture of the region have affected the outlook on the relation between humans, animals and nature. In several areas related to agriculture and food production the Nordic countries have been pioneering in theory, practice and policy.

NordSafe want to build on these achievements and continue developing a Nordic interdisciplinary initiative in this field. We have also perceived a great need to create possibilities for post-graduate students in the different disciplines to get an interdisciplinary approach and ethical/biological aspect of their own field of research. The current funding will give us a good opportunity to do this.

Network aims

The aim of the network is, in relation to ethical issues in agriculture, aquaculture, biotechnology and livestock production,

1. To strengthen existing coalitions and create a joint working platform of interdisciplinary expertise, both regionally and internationally, with the aim of promoting long-term

- cooperative research. The platform will also function as a meeting place for students and senior researchers.
2. To develop and advance cross-disciplinary teaching activities and research education at the post-graduate level, in order to promote holistic and innovative approaches to problem solving and to promote critical and ethically informed perspectives in the debate.
 3. To explore and critically assess Nordic-Baltic perspectives and practices as they relate to particular problems facing the regions with reference to an international context.
 4. To enhance the knowledge, interest and participation in the ethical discussion among PhD-students and researchers in science, and the insight in biological aspects of ethical issues among PhD-students and researchers in the humanities and social sciences.

Planned activities

One “kick-off” network meeting is planned this year, further three annual

PhD-courses and three network workshops, held in connection with the PhD-courses will be organised. The last two days of the PhD-courses will be a workshop on the current theme, where also others than PhD-students are invited to participate, as well as people from outside the Nordic region. In addition we aim to compile an e-learning package, including the publication of a web-book based on workshop presentations. There is already e-learning material published relevant to the network focus. The aim here is to compile and refine what is available, adding new material based on the PhD-courses in the network, making a package tailored for the needs uncovered and addressed by the network.

The first planning meeting will be held in Norway on the 16-17th of October 2007. The first PhD-course and workshop is planned to take place in the autumn of 2008.

We hope that that this network can continue also after the funded period through the Nordic Society for Agriculture and Food Ethics, and also through joint research projects.

News from the EU

On July 11, 2007 the European Group on Ethics of science and new technologies (EGE) has handed over to Commissioner Potočník its Opinion number 22, which was adopted by unanimity on June 20, 2007 and transmitted to President Barroso on July 9, 2007. The Opinion indicates the implementing measures (guidelines) to use during the ethics review of FP7 research projects on human embryonic stem cells (hESC), as

requested by the President of the European Commission, Mr. Barroso, and in line with the adoption of the EU’s Seventh Framework Programme for research and development (FP7).

This opinion is available online at http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/activities/docs/opinion_22_final_follow_up_en.pdf

Furthermore, the EGE has launched a public consultation on the ethical aspects of animal cloning for food supply (deadline: 30 September 2007). The consultation is available on the EGE website (http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/public_consultation_form.htm) and aims to provide input for the next Opinion that the EGE is preparing on this issue. Contributions are expected from a broad cross-section of European

society, including the scientific community, industry, civil society, policy-makers, media and the general public.

You are most welcome to contribute, and to circulate this information in order to increase the number and widen the scope of the contributions.

More information can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics

Conferences & Symposia

Summer

Sep 1-7

The First International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources (Interlaken, Switzerland)
Organised by the Animal Production and Health Division of the FAO
www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/angrvent2007.html

Sep 10-14

Interdisciplinary Aspects of Nanobiotechnology (Munich, Germany)
Organised by Interdisciplinary Institute TTN (technology, theology, natural sciences)
www.ttn-institut.de/call.pdf

Sep 13-15

EurSafe 2007. Sustainable Food Production and Ethics (Vienna, Austria)
7th Congress of the European Society for Agriculture and Food Ethics
www.nas.boku.ac.at/eursafe2007.html

Sep 13-15

EACME 2007 - Bioethics in the Real World (Zurich, Switzerland)
21st Annual Conference of the European Association of Centres of Medical Ethics
www.ethik.uzh.ch/ibme/eacme/index.html

Sep 16-19

World Conference on Research Integrity (Lisbon, Portugal)
Organised by European Science Foundation (ESF) and the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Research Integrity (ORI)
www.esf.org/activities/esf-conferences/details/confdetail242/conference-information.html

Sep 17-19

13th European Congress on Biotechnology. Symbiosis: Science, Industry and Society (Barcelona, Spain)
Organised by the European Federation of Biotechnology (EFB)
www.ecb13.eu/index.php/

Sep 20-21

NTAF 2007. 3rd Meeting of the Norwegian Transgenic Animal Forum (NTAF) (Oslo, Norway)
<http://ntaf.info/>

Sep 21-22

New Applications of Livestock Genetic Engineering (Leibniz-Saal, Berlin)
Organised by the Europäische Akademie
www.ea-aw.de/susanis_en/index.php?lang=EN

Sep 23-26

Harnessing Science for the Evolving Consumer: the Fit of Agricultural Biotechnology. ABIC 2007 (Alberta, Canada).
The Annual Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference (ABIC)
www.abic.ca/abic2007/

Sep 23-27

15th International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species (Nijmegen, The Netherlands)
Hosted by the Institute for Inland Water Management and Wastewater Treatment (RIZA)
www.icaais.org/

Sep 24-28

Biosafety of GM Crops and the Evolution of Regulatory Frameworks: Issues and Challenges (Minas Gerais, Brazil)
Organised by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB)
www.icgeb.org/MEETINGS/CRS07/BRASept07.pdf

Sep 27-28

Expressions of Traditional Wisdom International Symposium (Brussels, Belgium)
Organised by Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences together with Royal Museum for Central-Africa and Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium
www.kaowarsom.be/en/conferences.html

Sep 28-30

Linz 2007 - 14th Congress on Alternatives to Animal Testing (Linz, Austria)
Organised by ZET – Organised by the Centre for Alternative and Complementary Methods to Animal Testing and MEGAT -

Middle European Society for Alternative Methods to Animal Testing
www.zet.or.at/kongress/Linz2007/index.html

Autumn**Oct 5-6**

Humane Education: A Compassionate Ethic for Animals (Brisbane, Australia)
Centre for Public Culture and Ideas, Griffith University
www.griffith.edu.au/centre/cpci/news/human_education_sympium_flyer.pdf

Oct 5-8

People and Animals: Partnership in Harmony (Tokyo, Japan)
IAHAIO 2007: 11th International Conference on Human-Animal Interactions
Organised by Japanese members of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organisations (IAHAIO)
www2.convention.co.jp/iahaio.tokyo/

Oct 18-19

The Promises and Challenges of the Life Sciences Industry in Central and Eastern Europe (Prague, Czech Republic)
Organised by INNOGEN and OSI in conjunction with PASOS
www.innogen.ac.uk/News/Innogen-News/Promises-and-Challenges-of-the-Life-Science-Industry-in-CEE

Oct 23-25

International Symposium on Animal Genomics for Animal Health (Paris, France)
Organised by OIE, World Organisation for Animal Health
www.ars.usda.gov/meetings/AGAH2007/

Oct 24-27

Aquaculture Europe 2007: Competing Claims (Istanbul, Turkey)
Organized by the European Aquaculture Society
<http://home.scarlet.be/marevent/AQUA2007.htm>

Oct 31 – 4 Nov

Pathways of Human Dignity: From Cultural Traditions to a New Paradigm (Vadstena, Sweden)

Organised by the European Science Foundation and the University of Linköping
www.esf.org/conferences/07235

Nov 2-3

The Future of Our Species – Evolution, Disease and Sustainable Development (Heidelberg, Germany)

8th EMBO/EMBL Joint Conference on Science and Society
www.embo.org/scisoc/conference07.html

Nov 8-10

3rd International Scientific Conference Rural Development (Lithuania)
Organised by the Lithuanian University of Agriculture
www.lzuu.lt/rural_development/index.html

Nov 19-21

Food in a Future Climate – Conference on Sustainable Food Systems (Norrköping, Sweden)

Organised by the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

www.cul.slu.se/english/conference/index.html

Nov 30 – 1 Dec

International Conference on Ethics of Stem Cell Research and Moral Responsibility in ART (Ghent, Belgium)

Organized by the Bioethics Institute Ghent (BIG) and the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE)
www.bioethics.ugent.be/BIGconference

Dec 3-4

Scientists Center for Animal Welfare (SCAW) Winter Conference (Texas, USA)
www.scaw.com/conference.htm

Dec 18-19

Effects of the Environment on the Nutritional Quality and Safety of Organically Produced Foods (Reading, UK)
An international workshop organised by the University of Reading in association with the Natural Environment Research Council
www.apd.rdg.ac.uk/organicfoods/

Funding

Socio-economic sciences and Humanities

Cordis: FP7-SSH-2007-1

Deadline(s): 29 November 2007

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.CooperationDetailsCallPage&call_id=39

NORIA-net

Promotion of efficient co-operation between the Nordic countries in research and researcher education. Eligible participants are Nordic national research and innovation financiers and/or managers.

Deadline: 2007-10-03

http://www.formas.se/formas_templates/Page_3515.aspx

SESAME Integrated Project -GOCE 036949

Southern European Seas: Assessing and Modelling Ecosystem changes
The overall objective of the Socio-economic work is to explore the possibility of transferring and/or adapting state-of-the-art analytical and policy tools to investigating the economic welfare implications of alternative development scenarios in the SES marine ecosystems.

Deadline: 30th November 2007

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp6/projects_call.htm

Sofja Kovalevskaja Award

Gants to top-rank junior researcher from all disciplines from abroad for building up working groups and doing innovative research in Germany

Deadline: 4 January 2008

http://www.avh.de/en/programme/preise/kov_a.htm

PEOPLE

Ordis FP7-PEOPLE-2007-2-2-ERG

Deadline(s): 17 October 2007

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.PeopleDetailsCallPage&all_id=22

PEOPLE

Cordis: FP7-PEOPLE-2007-4-3-IRG

Deadline(s): 17 October 2007

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.PeopleDetailsCallPage&all_id=23

International Institute of Management - IIM

Projects: humanism, democracy, socioeconomic policy, innovation, ICT, SME

Deadline: Nov 2007 (request for future phases)

<http://www.iim-edu.org/research/2007/>

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