
ANNUAL REPORT 2000-2001

AND

STRATEGY DOCUMENT

2001-2003

**European Society for Agricultural and
Food Ethics (EurSafe)**

**Utrecht
October 2001**

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Preface

During the last century developments within agriculture and food production have been driven by the goal of securing a sufficient supply of good quality food products at a low price. The result has been intensive agriculture and industrialised food production.

In terms of fulfilling these goals, the development has been a remarkable success – at least in the affluent parts of the world. However, intensive agriculture and industrialised food production have caused a number of unintended side effects in terms of environmental problems, loss of biodiversity, animal welfare problems and food born diseases. In addition, the application of new technologies, not least gene technology, has given rise to concerns.

This situation calls for new approaches. There is of course a need for new technical solutions. However, there is also a need for reflection on the values underlying decision-making in agri-food production and for an examination of the perceptions and concerns of various stakeholders, including the general public. At the very least, there is a need for a forum that allows a broad discussion of the issues.

Such a forum is The European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe) is such a forum. It is still a very young organisation, less than three years have passed since the first steps were taken to establish the Society. However, there has, as demonstrated in the following pages, been remarkable progress in the Society's activities.

The core of the Society consists of a group of academics from all over Europe and North America who come from very different backgrounds such as science, sociology, law, economics, technology assessment, philosophy / theology. What they have in common is the willingness to deal with the issues in an interdisciplinary forum. However, EurSafe is not only an academic society, it is also open to everyone who believes it is important to discuss the values underlying agriculture and food production. Contributions from individuals with a professional background in agriculture, industry, NGOs, administration, etc, are warmly welcomed.

EurSafe has an important role to play in society. Thus, various stakeholders take an interest in our activities: NGOs, because ethics tends to broaden the agenda and legitimise critical perspectives; Industry, because ethical discussion is an efficient and relatively inexpensive way of handling inevitable problems; Government, because ethics allows discussion and dialogue between stakeholders with conflicting interests, an activity that hopefully paves the way to political solutions.

These broad interests are good for EurSafe, but the Society also has responsibilities. We should not be too naive, and let ourselves be influenced by any particular stakeholder group. Equally we should not be too cynical. We need to retain an open-minded approach to the views and values expressed by the various stakeholders.

Peter Sandøe, September, 2001
President of EurSafe

EurSafe

The European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe) is a new, independent organisation, which provides a focal point for those who have a professional interest in the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply.

The Society, first established in 1999 and founded in August 2000, is an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and non-partisan organisation. The goals of the Society are described in its statutes. EurSafe aims:

- to encourage academic education and research on the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply
- to encourage international public debate on the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply

EurSafe strives to achieve its aims through various activities, such as: (a) organising a communication network facilitated through a network database, for people from professional practice, academic disciplines, social organisations and public administration and maintaining (b) organising scientific conferences and other events to stimulate public debate; (c) publishing newsletters; (d) organising a variety of meetings to promote public awareness of the issues.

Currently (October 2001), the Society has over 185 individual members from all over Europe and the rest of the world. Moreover, EurSafe has more than 25 institutional members from, among others, industry, academia, government, NGOs and other professional organisations.

1. Introduction

This document combines the Annual Report 2000-2001 and the EurSafe strategy 2001-2003. In the Annual Report the Executive Committee describes the activities it has undertaken between the Copenhagen Conference (August 24-26, 2000) and September 2001. In the strategy document the Executive Committee proposes to the General Assembly, a strategy clarifying its intentions for the forthcoming years (2001-2003). After writing the 2001 Yearplan in September 2000, the Executive Committee believes that EurSafe is now able to formulate its strategy for the next three years. The Strategy document 2001-2003 will serve as a programme of action for the Executive Committee until the first Committee elections, which are scheduled to take place at the 2003 Congress.

2. Annual Report 2000-2001

2.1 Founding the Society

After the approval of the final draft of the statutes by members at the General Meeting of the Second Congress in Copenhagen, the Executive Committee formalised the Society's official foundation at the Notary's office on November 28, 2000. The Constitution of EurSafe conforms with Dutch legislation. The statutes of EurSafe have been published on its website.

2.2 Executive Committee

During the year 2000-2001 the membership of the Executive Committee remained unchanged. The Committee held four meetings, in August 2000, December 2000, April 2001 and September 2001.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2000 - 2003)

President:	Peter Sandøe Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment, Royal Agricultural and Veterinary University, Copenhagen, Denmark
Vice-President:	Claudio Peri Department of Food Science and Technology, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Milan, Italy
Secretary:	Frans W.A .Brom Centre for Bio-Ethics and Health Law, Utrecht University, The Netherlands

- Treasurer:** Abbo de Wit
Ethics Committee, Royal Agricultural Society, Wageningen, The Netherlands
- Members:** Andrea Arz de Falco
Swiss Ethics Committee on Non-human Gene Technology, Bern, Switzerland
- Linda Fulponi
Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, OECD, Paris, France
- Emmanuel Jolivet
Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, Centre de Jouy-en-Josas, France
- Ben Mepham
Centre for Applied Bioethics, School of Biosciences, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom
- Cees Veerman
Executive Board of the Wageningen University and Research Centre, The Netherlands

2.3 Conferences and Workshops

After the Second Congress in Copenhagen in 2000, EurSafe initiated and participated in the organisation of the Third Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics in Florence. The Accademia dei Georgofili, Florence, Italy was the host organisation. This congress aimed to enhance discussions and the exchange of ideas on ethical issues in agriculture and food among academic and non-academic professionals. Therefore, EurSafe invited philosophers, scientists, public administrators, regulators and company managers to attend EurSafe 2001. The Congress hoped to stimulate a well-informed and critical debate on such divergent issues as food safety, food quality and novel agri-food technologies. During the congress there were five central topics: Food Quality; Food Safety; Ethical Methods; Sustainable Rural Development; and Animal Welfare.

Moreover, EurSafe initiated an e-discussion on a text concerning the relation between ethics, agriculture, food and international trade. This discussion was a follow-up to the first meeting of the “Transatlantic Platform for Consumer Concerns and International Trade” that was held in June 2000.

2.4 Members

During the Society’s first year, a great deal of time was spent building a network of potential individual members. This has resulted in a database of nearly 400 individuals who have shown interest in the Society. All of these received an invitation from the secretariat in December 2000 to become a member of EurSafe. As a result of this mailing, more than 180 have become individual members. As well as individual memberships, EurSafe also operates an institutional membership scheme. A wide variety of organisations and institutes were

invited to support the Society by becoming institutional members. Currently (October 2001), EurSafe has over 20 institutional members from industry, academic and research organisations, governmental organisations, NGOs, etc.

2.5 National Platforms

From the time it was first established EurSafe has been searching for ways to link national and international activities and discussions. One mechanism developed to bring together national and international activities was the establishment of a network of National Platforms. These platforms should, as with EurSafe, be platforms not only for philosophers and ethicists who are concerned with the future of agriculture, but also (and equally importantly) for farmers, agricultural suppliers, food manufacturers, retailers, caterers, policy makers in government and industry, NGOs, academics, research scientists and the general public. It is also hoped that the National Platforms will not only facilitate, but even possibly lead discussions and activities in this area at a national level. These activities would be extremely important as a source of information for other established international networks and the activities of EurSafe. Moreover, these platforms could serve as a useful resource for the EurSafe secretariat.

In 2000, the Dutch National Platform held its first meeting, in co-operation with the Netherlands Society for Bio-ethics. In the UK, the Food Ethics Council is in the process of forming a UK Platform. In Italy, as an integral part of the preparation for the 2001 Congress, steps have been taken to establish a national platform.

2.6 Transatlantic Platform on Consumer Concerns and International Trade

In 2000, EurSafe initiated the Transatlantic Platform on Consumer Concerns and International Trade to stimulate and facilitate a transatlantic and multidisciplinary debate among scientists and policy-makers. The central issue for the group was the question: How might people's genuine food-related concerns be reconciled with further liberalisation of international trade in future negotiations of the WTO (World Trade Organisation)?

The platform held its first meeting on 15-17 June 2000 in Lelystad (NL). The aim of this meeting was to draw up a proposal to direct further initiatives aimed at addressing the wide plurality of questions relating to consumer concerns and international trade. During 2001 this proposal was formulated and discussed by a wide variety of scholars during an internet group discussion organised by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. The discussion was both a follow-up to the first meeting and part of the preparatory work for a second meeting to be held in the USA in 2002.

2.7 Communication

The internal and external communications of EurSafe have also been central themes in the Society's 2000-2001 activities.

2.7.1 Newsletter

The EurSafe Newsletter has encouraged communication. Volkert Beekman (Chief-Editor), Dirk Lips, Kate Millar, Erminio Monteleone, Silke Schicktanz and Geir Tveit have published four issues of the Newsletter since the Copenhagen Conference. The main objective of the Newsletter is to act as a source of information on conferences, courses, institutes, etc. Since the March 2001 issue, the Newsletter has been published in a new and improved format. In the current format the Newsletter presents information in seven sections: 1) Special announcement; 2) Transatlantic Platform for Consumer Concerns and International Trade; 3) Conferences & Courses; 4) Institutes & Projects; 5) Legislation & Policy; 6) Books & Journals; 7) Web sites.

Until 2001, the Newsletter was only available in an electronic format distributed by e-mail, but with the introduction of the new format, it has also become possible for members of EurSafe to receive a paper copy.

2.7.2 Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics

EurSafe has established a strong link with the Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics (JAEE). The Journal, under the editorial guidance of Professor Richard P. Haynes (University of Florida), published Volume 14 (four issues) in 2001, of which one issue (Volume 14/2) contains selected papers from the Second EurSafe Congress. Further demonstrating this association, in addition to the publication of papers from the congress, the EurSafe Secretary also holds the position of European Editor for the Journal and several members of EurSafe are also on the Editorial Board.

As a result of the close link between EurSafe and the Journal, members of EurSafe may subscribe to the Journal at a reduced rate. More than 50 members now subscribe to JAEE.

2.7.3 EurSafe Website

EurSafe has established its own website at www.eursafe.org. After a number of difficulties with the website in 2000, the Centre for Applied Bioethics (University of Nottingham) took responsibility for its redesign and maintenance, and subsequently launched the new website in December 2000. Important information for members is regularly published on the website, including information on: Congresses; the Organisation's structure; Newsletter; Membership details; National and Transatlantic platforms. The website is periodically updated and provides several useful links to other organisations in the field of agricultural and food ethics. The new website has become an important link in EurSafe's overall communication strategy.

2.8 Financial Report

According to the Statutes, the financial year of the Society runs from 1 March to the last day of February in the following year inclusive, the financial section of the annual report runs until the 1 March 2001. In order to give a better insight into EurSafe's financial situation financial details are included from the date of the First EurSafe Congress (March 1999). Hence this report covers the period from 1 April 1999 till 1 March 2001.

During this period EurSafe did not receive any income from membership fees. The founding fund (ca. 48.500,- at 1 April, 1999) was used to finance the Society's total expenditure of about 27.000,- in this period. This fund was, for the most part, secured through specific fund raising activities in 1999 and 2000. The cash balance of the First EurSafe congress in Wageningen 1999 also added to the founding fund.

The Society's total expenditure is composed of 50% salary costs for the Executive Officer, 35% running costs of the Secretariat and 15% travelling costs. The Executive Committee estimates that the expenditures, which have been very modest during this first period, will rise up to 30.000,-. This amount will be financed in the coming years by membership fees of both institutional and individual membership. For further details of the financial strategy please refer to paragraph 3.6.

For those who want more information, an extended financial report is available from the Secretariat. This extended report was approved both by the General Assembly meeting during the Third Congress in Florence (October 2001) and by the Cash Audit Commission.

3. Strategy 2001-2003

After the founding period (March 1999 till August 2000) and the official establishment of the Society on August 26, 2000, EurSafe is now in the position to formulate a three-year strategy. The Executive Committee has defined the Society's strategy as five fields of activity. These are: (1) The EurSafe network, (2) EurSafe as a professional and academic organisation, (3) EurSafe as congress organiser, (4) EurSafe's public role (5) EurSafe's Financial position.

3.1 Introduction

During the initial period, the Society focused its activities on issues such as: building a network, the official foundation, recruiting members, and raising funds to ensure a sound financial future for EurSafe. These issues and the organisation of the two congresses required the majority of the Founding Board and Secretariats' time. Some of these activities (e.g. the congresses and the recruitment of members) will remain a central issue. However, over the next few years, EurSafe will also explore new activities relevant to the field of agricultural and food ethics.

3.2 A Network

In its short history, EurSafe has become an international network for those whose work in agricultural and food sectors. This networking function is one of the most important characteristics of EurSafe and makes it a rather unique European society. Few would dispute that there is a need for a European and International network for those who have a professional interest in the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply.

In the next three years the Executive Committee plans to consolidate and further develop this role. The establishment of national platforms may be very useful in achieving these objectives. Adhering to the EurSafe philosophy, these platforms should be of value to a wide range of stakeholders involved in these important issues. These platforms do not necessarily have to be purely national bodies, but could also be defined by a common language (e.g. a German speaking network). In the coming years the Executive Committee will endeavour to actively stimulate the establishment of platforms in different countries.

3.3 Academic and Professional organisation

In addition to the network function, EurSafe operates as an academic organisation. Due to the nature of the first two congresses and co-operation with the Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, the Society demonstrates a strong academic characteristic. This academic orientation has had a significant influence on the membership. A considerable number of the current EurSafe members have a professional background in universities and academic research centres.

During the next three years EurSafe plans to continue its work and explore further possibilities in the academic field. However, EurSafe also wishes to emphasise that the Society is not merely an academic organisation, but is keen to include all professional groups interested in the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply.

3.3.1 Research

According to the Executive Committee the importance of EurSafe for those actively involved in research lies in its ability to facilitate and possibly coordinate research collaborations. This coordinating function is important for international and multidisciplinary projects such as those funded through EU programmes. The cross-disciplinary nature of EurSafe is quite unique and this may enable the Society to exert significant influence on research priorities. As a result, EurSafe aims to stimulate research in the field of agricultural and food ethics and to encourage multidisciplinary research.

3.3.2 Education

A high priority for the next three years is the Society's role in encouraging education in the field of agricultural and food ethics. EurSafe will co-operate with and support some forms of academic education, for example the Summer School by FLAD/ NSF in 2001 and a Summer School in the Netherlands in 2002. Besides these specific plans, the Executive Committee stresses that a greater diversity of education methods for agricultural and food ethics should be developed. EurSafe will attempt to secure additional funds for this purpose.

3.4 Congress

During recent years the congresses have been the central point of EurSafe's activities. For a number of reasons these congresses have been of utmost importance to EurSafe as an institution and for its members. For most EurSafe members these congresses are a welcome and rare opportunity to have 'face to face' contact with colleagues in the same field and to get first hand information from different perspectives. For EurSafe, up until recently these gatherings have been one of the very few, if not the only times that the Society is able to actively encourage international public debate on the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply.

In forthcoming years EurSafe will focus on developing the value of these meetings for those who have a professional interest, but who are not working in academic institutions. With regards to the position of EurSafe as an international network, it is also important that individuals or interested parties from industry, NGOs and government participate in the congresses.

One of the proposals to make EurSafe congresses of greater interest to non-academic participants is by organising Round Table meetings on specific themes, which could take

place at each Congress. The Executive Committee has approved the request from INRA, France to organise the Fourth EurSafe congress in 2003.

3.5 Public role

In addition to the network function of EurSafe, the Society also has a public role. This is articulated in the Society's aims, which have been formulated, to encourage international public debate on the ethical issues involved in agriculture and food supply. During its early years, EurSafe has demonstrated this commitment by publishing a Newsletter and building an Internet site. In this way EurSafe has indirectly joined the public debate.

In the future, EurSafe intends to continue to improve these activities. The Editorial Board of the Newsletter has been asked to review the Executive Committee's idea of making the Newsletter more 'public-friendly' by using a shorter format with possible links to further reading on the Internet.

The website will remain an important source of information on the activities of EurSafe, hence its maintenance has a high priority.

3.6 Finance

All the aforementioned activities require funding. Therefore, the Executive Committee has produced a financial strategy for the next three years. As part of this financial policy a distinction has been made between (a) expenditure concerning the Secretariat and Executive Committee and (b) expenditure for specific events.

a. Expenditure concerning the Secretariat and Executive Committee

The general policy concerning the activities of both the Secretariat and Executive Committee designates that costs have to be financed with membership fees. The Executive Committee believes that if additional resources (i.e. funds not derived from membership fees) are needed for these activities this would impact on the Society's ability to carry out the tasks proposed in the strategy document (2001-2003).

b. Expenditures for specific events

These costs include the congress and other events organised by EurSafe. In terms of policy, the Executive Committee aims to finance these activities both by registration fees and sponsorship.

Since the annual costs for the Secretariat and Executive Committee are at least Euro 25.000,- the Society has a membership target of 400 individual and 40 institutional members. The recruitment drive in 2001 demonstrated that membership is closely related to EurSafe congress attendance. Therefore, the society needs more time to reach the membership target. With the current 182 individual members and 24 institutional members EurSafe is half way to its target. In

the coming years substantial efforts will be needed to ensure that this target is reached quickly in order to provide the Society with a solid financial basis.

One of the priorities is to give special attention to the recruitment of institutional members. In order to facilitate this, EurSafe is planning to establish a database to ensure that all possible target groups are identified. The target groups are categorised as:

- a. governmental organisations
- b. professional organisations
- c. industry, trade, banking institutions
- d. universities and research institutes
- e. public organisations, NGOs
- f. international organisations (e.g. FAO, EU)

For specific events the Executive Committee regards sponsorship as acceptable. The conditions for potential sponsors are the same as for institutional members i.e. any organisations and institutions that are involved in agriculture and food supply. Besides the agri-food sector, related institutional sponsors may also be found in the 'cultural and welfare foundations'. When accepting sponsorship for specific EurSafe activities, the board has set out three preconditions: (a) there should be a balance between smaller and larger sponsors, (b) the selection of sponsors should be consistent with the target groups of the congress/special events and (c) sponsorship should be an open affair.

For further Information:

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