

European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe)

Newsletter

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December 1999

Editorial

These dark days between the complete failure of Seattle and the dawning of a new millennium are the perfect time for reflection. However, this Newsletter also shows that EurSafe does not suffer from fin-de-siecle fatalism but bubbles with new activities. You will find a call for papers for our second conference in Copenhagen (Denmark), the announcement of the publication of two special issues of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* with papers from our first conference, and information about a Dutch platform and a Nordic study circle as new regional branches of EurSafe. Moreover, whereas the WTO meeting in Seattle was a complete failure, this does not mean that one should not address the issue of how to deal with consumer concerns about, for instance, biotechnology, animal welfare, environmental problems, or fair trade in the scope of further liberalisation of the global economy. Whether we like or not, the WTO is going to be with us in the next millennium too, and we had better find ways to address consumer concerns within this frame of reference. Therefore, you will also find a proposal to start a transatlantic expert group on consumer concerns in the scope of WTO negotiations. By the way, we still would not mind it, if more people submitted information, letters, reviews or other contributions to the Newsletter. We wish you all a happy new year and a good start of a millennium in which agricultural and food ethics will be a substantial part of our world!

Volkert Beekman, Trine Iversen, Kate Millar, Erminio Monteleone, Silke Schicktanz, Raoul Weiler

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EurSafe NEWS

Second Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe 2000)
August 24-26, 2000, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen, Denmark

Call for Papers

The Organising Committee hereby invites submission of papers and posters for the 2nd Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics. Title and abstract (1-2 pages) for papers and posters to be presented at the conference must be submitted before March 1, 2000. Please also fill tag below or send the relevant information by e-mail. Submissions including tags should be sent to Conference Secretary Annelise Ito (see tag for details!). You will be informed whether your submission has been accepted before April 1, 2000. After acceptance a more comprehensive abstract for the Book of Pre-prints must be submitted before May 1, 2000. Final Call with details about registration and invited speakers will be available 1 February. Theme for EurSafe 2000 "Two Systems - One World":

- * Ethical issues in agricultural and food biotechnology;
- * Ethical issues in organic farming and food production – Goals and practice;
- * The reshaping of conventional farming – A European model?

Information on the congress, web-site: <http://www.husdyr.kvl.dk/htm/psa/EURSAFE.htm>

.....
I would like to make a presentation at the EurSafe Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics 2000.

Name

Organisation

Address

Fax

E-mail

Title of paper/poster

- Poster
- Oral presentation

The presentation falls under the theme:

- Ethical issues in agricultural and food biotechnology
- Ethical issues in organic farming and food production - Goals and practice
- The reshaping of conventional farming - A European model?

Please type or write in block capitals. Send by e-mail, fax or post to: Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics, Att. Annelise Ito, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Dept. of Animal Science and Animal Health, Div. of Ethology and Health, Grønnegårdsvej 8, DK-1870 Frederiksberg C, Denmark, phone + 45 3528 3010, fax + 45 3528 3022, e-mail: ai@kvl.dk

Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics 1999

EurSafe cooperates with the Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics. This journal, as the name already suggests, publishes papers in the sub-disciplines of agricultural, food and environmental ethics. The journal provides a forum for discussion on the wide ranges of moral issues and questions in actual or projected agricultural, food and environmental policies. One may think of ethical questions about the responsibilities of agricultural producers, the assessment of technological changes and their effects on farms, the utilisation of arable land and other resources, the development of intensive agriculture, the modification of ecosystems, animal welfare, the professional responsibilities of agricultural scientists, veterinarians or food scientists, the use of biotechnology, and the safety, availability, and payability of food. The journal will also provide a forum for publishing papers presented at EurSafe congresses. It will publish both ethically relevant scientific papers and philosophical papers. Moreover, in addition to substantial papers, the journal will also publish briefer discussion pieces. The Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics is peer-reviewed.

Editorial Board

The Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics saw a change in the editorial board in 1999. Richard P. Haynes became Editor in Chief and Frans W.A. Brom the new European Editor. Frans W.A. Brom will also be responsible for the relation between EurSafe and the journal.

Submissions

The Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics invites you to submit relevant papers. Please include an electronic file. Submissions may also be made directly by e-mail attachment. Submissions to the journal should be addressed to: Richard P. Haynes, Editor Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, PO Box 118545, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-8545, USA, e-mail: rhaynes@phil.ufl.edu or to: Frans W.A. Brom, European editor Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, Centre for Bio-ethics and Health Law, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 2, NL-3584 CS Utrecht, e-mail: fbrom@theo.uu.nl

Subscription for EurSafe Members

All individual members of EurSafe have the possibility to subscribe to the journal for the special price of fl 50,-/annual volume (approx. 25 Euro). The 1999 volume will contain three issues. Subscription for the 1999 issues is still possible. Institutions and libraries are kindly requested to contact Kluwer Academic Publishers directly.

The 1999 volume

The first issue of 1999 (12/1) will be published within a few weeks time. This issue is based on the First European Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics (Wageningen, March 1999). The editors of this special issue are Frans W.A. Brom and Volkert Beekman. All participants to this congress will automatically receive this special issue. Other people, who are interested in this issue and consider subscribing to the journal, can also receive this issue as a sample copy. Please send your name and address to the EurSafe secretariat (Eursafe@theo.uu.nl). The second and third issues of the journal (12/2 and 12/3) will be published soon after the 12/1 issue. The second issue is also related to First European Congress on Agricultural and Food Ethics. Its scope is food ethics, and it will contain papers based on presentations at this congress. The editors of this special issue are Frans W.A. Brom and Bart Gremmen.

EurSafe membership

If you are a member of EurSafe and want to subscribe for 1999 please send your name and address to the EurSafe secretariat and transfer – at the same time – the amount of 50 Dutch Guilders to account number 104185 Postbank, Utrecht, Netherlands. EurSafe membership is free until the 2nd Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics: EurSafe 2000, August 24-26,

2000, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen, Denmark. After this congress, the membership – including four newsletters a year, reduction to the Annual Congress, participation in National Networks and a reduced subscription price for the Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics – will cost 25 Euro a year. We will provide you with more information about the membership in the spring of 2000.

Important note

If you send an e-mail to the Secretariat about the Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, would you be perfectly clear about whether you subscribe for the 1999 volume or wish to receive a sample copy (12/1) to see what the journal is like.

Addresses

For individual EurSafe members:

Subscription rate: NLG 50,-

Franck Meijboom, Executive Officer

European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics, EurSafe

Centre for Bio-ethics and Health Law, Utrecht University

Heidelberglaan 2

NL-3584 CS Utrecht

For institutions and libraries:

Subscription rate: NLG 370.00 / USD 176.00

Kluwer Academic Publishers,

P.O. Box 322, 3300 AH Dordrecht, The Netherlands or

P.O. Box 358, Accord Station, Hingham, MA 02018-0358, USA

Dutch Platform for Agricultural and Food Ethics

February 18, 2000, a Dutch platform for agricultural and food ethics will be established at Wageningen University and Research Centre. At their first meeting, they will discuss consumer concerns, animal welfare, novel foods, sustainability, and information and labelling. Information, e-mail: bea.prijn@secr.tf.wau.nl

Nordic Study Circle

Within the Nordic Summer University, an interdisciplinary organization funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, a study circle with the theme "Agricultural, Fisheries and Food Ethics" has been accepted for a period of three years. The idea is that study circles shall be working on this theme, parallel in the Nordic university cities during the year and meeting for one weekend in the winter and for one week during the summer. The questions discussed will be practical as well as theoretical questions, inspired by the discussions within EurSafe and adapted to a Nordic context. Representatives will take part in EurSafe meetings.

We included the fisheries aspects as being indispensable in comprehensive food ethics and demanding a thorough analysis. From a narrow fisheries point of view, within fishing there is a spectrum of environmental costs and benefits, hardly less wide than that of agriculture, ranging from small scale fishing of surplus production on the one hand, to industrial vacuum-cleaning of almost all life in an area and to changing the genetic structure of the fishes by genetic engineering on the other hand. In a wider context, we find it pressing to become able to compare environmental costs of food resulting from fishing and agriculture respectively in a qualitative, many-sided way. This explanation does not imply that fishery ethics is going to be the main theme. It is one theme among many themes, mainly focusing on the themes of EurSafe. Besides, however, we will use the comparison to fisheries ethics as an additional perspective, in some cases as a corrective. It is our aim to publish an anthology of food ethics based on the contributions to our meetings. Our first planned meeting will take place at Elsinore, Denmark, March 10-12, 2000. The target group is academics from the Nordic countries, engaged in a wide range of food ethics and environmental ethics questions. But we invite anyone within EurSafe, who finds our perspective interesting, to take

part in our discussions and meetings. If so, the language of discussion will be English. Information, Merete Sørensen, Skovagervej 6B, DK-8240 Risskov, Denmark, phone + 45 8942 4496, fax + 45 8616 6086, e-mail: nsu@hum.au.dk, web-site: <http://www.aau.dk/nsu/an>

***Proposal for a Transatlantic Expert Group for Consumer Concerns,
in the Scope of WTO Negotiations¹***

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Abstract

Consumer concerns pop up. They are related to the safety of agrifood products for people, for animals and for the environment as well as the social and ethical implications of certain agrifood production methods. At first sight, the WTO agreement and the SPS and TBT agreements appear to offer sufficient legal scope to deal with these concerns and resolve trade conflicts. The events of recent years, however, have shown the limitations of these agreements in dealing with cultural differences between nations and with the social and political pressure on national governments to lay down restrictive, trade distorting measures. It is vital that we consider the dynamic relationship between national governments, civil society and the market. In the United States, Canada and Europe, this realisation is growing. We propose that these issues should be studied by experts in several disciplines: technical experts, hygiene experts and veterinarians, public administration experts, lawyers, philosophers, ethicists, sociologists and of course economists. To unite these disciplines and provide a platform for discussion in the light of international trade liberalisation, the cultural identity of distinct communities and the functioning of the democratic nation state an international network are needed. We therefore propose establishing a network to explore the issues and dynamics described above. The network should be international and interdisciplinary with participants, initially, from science and government. The purpose of the network would be to present new perspectives to the negotiating parties in the next WTO round. The first steps to realisation have since been made and an initiative group has been established.

Keywords: WTO, Consumer Concerns, Expert Group, Food Ethics

1. Justification

International trade in agrifood products is increasing and some suggest that this is in part due to the trade liberalisation efforts of the GATT and WTO agreements. However, most economists concur that the major achievement of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act was to bring agriculture trade into the general regulatory framework of the WTO, rather than to significantly increase market access in practice. While some countries have experienced increased economic growth as a result of trade liberalisation in manufactures over past decades, for agriculture the impacts of recent trade liberalisation agreements are yet to materialise. This may be due to the only moderate reductions in trade restrictive measures agreed upon. While increasing economic growth and welfare through increased market access remain the goals of the WTO members, this is often difficult to achieve. A number of critics also contend that the trade liberalisation does not sufficiently benefit the developing countries and some NGOs have been critical regarding issues neglected by the WTO.

In any case, trade liberalisation is an important process which is by no means complete. Initial

¹ This proposal will also be published in the Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics.

efforts were aimed at reducing tariffs and eliminating quantitative barriers to trade. The 1994 Uruguay Round with its adjacent agreements, SPS and TBT, also focused its attention on the harmonisation of national safety regulations. Achievements in this field are to a large extent responsible for the revolutionary change in the character of the international marketplace - from a suppliers' market to a buyers' market - and by extension, in the relationship between governments, civil society and the market. A very significant aspect of this changed relationship is that the power of national governments to impose restrictive trade measures has been severely curbed.

One consequence of this changing relationship, affecting multinational companies, is that, in some countries, an agreement with the national government no longer guarantees the continuity of business operations. A company's social licence to produce depends on the support of civil society in a country. In these countries, government support is not the same as popular support. Multinationals have also become dependent on the support of internationally operating single-issue organisations. The Brent Spar affair showed us that these organisations fight their battles strategically, by choosing a country where the multinational concerned stands to lose most.

Clearly, neither the government nor trade and industry (the market) can afford to ignore the voice of the public. And they are speaking up more and more often. Their concerns, consumer concerns, are related to the safety of agrifood products for people, for animals and for the environment as well as the social and ethical implications of certain agrifood production methods². At first sight, the WTO agreement and the SPS and TBT agreements appear to offer sufficient legal scope to deal with some of these concerns and resolve trade conflicts. The events of recent years, however, have shown both the limitations of these agreements in dealing with cultural differences between nations and the social and political pressure on national governments to lay down restrictive, trade distorting measures. Cultural differences are due to differences in traditions, norms and values, all of which are deeply rooted in society. That is why it is so difficult to resolve cultural conflicts through negotiation and compromise. We all have our own firm convictions about what is right and wrong, which we are all equally loathe to surrender. These types of conflicts have revealed the shortcomings of the WTO framework of regulations. For example, it cannot be applied for safety-related objections about production methods. In addition, there are safety-related cases where risk assessment procedures and the criterion of sound scientific evidence are unable to provide satisfactory solutions. Even though the results of these procedures are presented by renowned scientific experts, opponents may reject them on the basis of contradictory conclusions produced by other equally expert scientists³.

It is widely accepted that consumer concerns should not lead to new trade restrictions or disguised protectionism, but equally no one wants the functioning of our democratic states to be compromised by putting the business interests in the international market first. Further trade liberalisation probably depends on the ability to link it with further socialisation of the marketplace. The challenge, however, concerns how national governments, civil society and the market should address consumer concerns and how we should deal with the social and political demand for direct or indirect restrictive measures for certain products or production methods, which fall outside the scope of the WTO? We should not make the mistake of seeing the problem as one which only national governments are empowered to resolve because the new international market of demand changes the roles of all parties concerned. International co-operation therefor requires the participation of all parties. Moreover, the usual strategy of national governments to boost consumer autonomy by

² There are many types of consumer concerns. GMOs alone are the subject of many different concerns. The primary concern is whether GMO products and production methods (transgenesis) are safe for people, animals and the environment. There are other concerns, too, about the very nature of genetic modification. Such concerns are often rooted in different norms and values about life. On his web site, Prince Charles writes about Man playing God; the Swiss constitution lays down the inherent value of living nature. There are also concerns about the balance of justice. People are worried about the power that patent law gives to multinationals over existing production systems in developing countries, which might result in these countries becoming economically and legally dependent.

³ The importance of major - culturally dependent - differences in risk perception and their influence on the international harmonisation of regulations for product safety and production methods should not be underestimated.

increasing the transparency of the market and ensuring that consumers are adequately informed does not always produce the desired effect. To start with, some consumers, such as children and the very old, cannot participate to such methods, while some food products are so important to the diet that no degree of risk is acceptable. In such cases the government takes responsibility for food safety. We shall have to find alternatives to deal with the great variety of consumer concerns affecting international markets.

Dealing with consumer concerns is a matter for us all: national governments, market parties and civil society. And the crux of the matter lies in how the roles of all parties will develop, both in the national-political dimension and on the international market.

2. Future Trends

Many things are changing and the parties concerned will have to respond effectively to these changes. First, there is the matter of who leads the chain in the agri-food industry. This role is shifting to the end of the chain, that is to food processors, retailers and caterers. The food industry is undergoing a (technological and economic) revolution whose effects will certainly be felt by producers at the beginning of the chain. This applies particularly to countries with a traditionally strong agricultural sector. Multinational food processing and retail companies account for more than 50% of world food-trade; and of that, more than 50% again is intra-industrial trade. These multinationals are very much aware of the fact that consumers' trust determines their competitiveness on international markets. That is why they take consumer concerns seriously, and do what they can to address these concerns, for example, by making production chains more transparent, explaining production methods, providing information about the origin and quality of food products, and by seeking new relationships with civil society and government bodies. Companies lay down new codes of conduct and consult consumer organisations and single-issue organisations in matters concerning product development and corporate image. It is not just a token gesture: national or even international collaborative agreements on various matters now exist between corporations and single-issue organisations. And even more remarkably, perhaps, governments - once the dominus litis in such matters - are not automatically a party to such agreements.

At the same time, modern technology is chipping away at the very roots of familiar products and production-methods and returns to scale lead to concentration and market power. Again, it is up to the last links in the chain to gain the trust of consumers and civil society, and to retain it. Currently, companies around the world are holding campaigns to convince the public of the benefits of new food processing techniques and biotechnology. New techniques like these are forcing us to review our concepts of food, medicine and stimulants. Thus, we now differentiate six categories: stimulants, luxury foods, basics, functional foods, nutraceuticals and pharmaceuticals. And this is just for starters! In the mid-to-long term, we predict the rise of a new (displacement) market for animal proteins from the large-scale culture of transgenic bacteria, fungi and cells. It is vital that national governments respond adequately to this development. Specifically, new standards of safety and acceptability must be laid down and the government must define its role and responsibility for each category.

Finally, we should consider the influence of combined technologies, especially the combination of transport technology, information technology and biotechnology, on global issues such as the food supply, the welfare of developing countries and a fair distribution across people and nations of the benefits of the new technologies. If governments and trade and industry are to tackle these issues as the public demands, they will have to explain how and under what conditions technology can contribute to the solution.

3. WTO, The Appeal

As evidenced by the above, these are turbulent times indeed. It is not surprising that nations are wary of further trade liberalisation when clear conceptual frameworks are yet to be developed. Politicians and policy-makers who believe strongly in free world trade should, however, regard this as a challenge rather than a threat. They should understand that broad support for further trade liberalisation will only come when they have recognised the problems described above. And that implies that they, too, must find innovative approaches and new directive strategies to tackle these problems. More than before, the global market is booming, a fact which enhances our chance of

success. It is also vital that we consider the dynamic relationship between national governments, civil society and the market.

In the United States, Canada and Europe, this realisation is growing. Certainly, transatlantic relationships are characterised by lingering trade conflicts; at the same time; however, we should not forget the many discussions about the changing relationship between the market, society and the government. The guiding principle should be, as mentioned before, that we avoid new trade restrictions while finding solutions to current developments and tendencies as described above.

4. A Transatlantic Working Party

The issues described above are studied by experts in several disciplines: technical experts, hygiene experts and veterinarians, public administration experts, lawyers, philosophers, ethicists, sociologists and of course economists. Many businesses are modifying their business strategies in anticipation of future changes. Many government bodies and NGOs are trying to work out how the relationship between civil society, government and the market will change in the near future. What is needed however, is an international network to unite these disciplines and provide a platform for discussion in the light of international trade liberalisation, the cultural identity of distinct communities and the functioning of the democratic nation state. We fervently support such a network, not to slow down further trade liberalisation but to advance it. In our view, attention to agrifood and technological developments and a strategic use of change and renewal in governments, civil society and the market can only benefit international trade.

We therefore propose establishing a network to explore the issues and dynamics described above. The network should be international and interdisciplinary with participants. The purpose of the network would be to present new perspectives to the negotiating parties in the next WTO round. The network should evolve naturally and it should not be embedded institutionally until it has proven itself. A tried and tested method to get something like this going is to organise one or more international conferences a year to discuss the issues raised. We propose holding such conferences for the full duration of the WTO Round. It is vital that the conferences are organised by a transatlantic working party. The first steps to realisation have since been made and an initiative group has been established.

We would like the working party to receive the status of an expert group for all official bodies who consult it. Thus, the group could carry out coordinative tasks, assist in the drawing up of research programmes and facilitate the forming of opinion and public debate.

5. Continuation

We are planning two conferences for next year. In the first, we will establish a research programme titled "Consumer concerns and WTO/GATT" and give an overview of the current situation. Support, both in spirit and financially, will be asked from official bodies participating in the WTO/GATT negotiations for this initiative. Funds will be sought to organise conferences and to cover the costs of the expert group. The initiators will meet in Amsterdam in March 2000 to decide on concrete follow-up steps. If you are interested, please contact us.

Co-operation

We are planning to elaborate this idea in co-operation with:

Jean-Christophe Bureau, Professor, INAP & the National Institute of Agricultural Research INRA-Grignon, France.

Lawrence Busch, Director of the Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards, University distinguished professor, Department of Sociology, Michigan State University.

Lester M. Crawford, Director of the Center for Food and Nutrition Policy, Georgetown University.

Pieter Feenstra, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Denmark.

Linda Fulponi, Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, OECD.

Bart Gremmen, Director of the Centre for Food and Technology Assessment, Wageningen University and Research Centre.

Michiel Korthals, Professor of Philosophy, Wageningen University and Research Centre.

Catherine Larrère, Professor of Philosophy, UFR de Philosophie, Université Michel de Montaigne.

Louis Mahé, Professor of the National Institute of Agricultural Research, France.

Ben Mepham, Director of the Centre for Applied Ethics, University of Nottingham.
Dietmar Mieth, Professor and Speaker of the Interfaculty Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen, Member of the European Group on Ethics of the sciences and new technologies.
Claudio Peri, Professor, Department of Food Science and Microbiology, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Milan.
Peter Sandøe, Professor of Philosophy and Bio-ethics, Department of Animal Science and Animal Health Royal Veterinary & Agricultural University, Denmark.
Egbert Schroten, Professor and director of the Centre for Bio-ethics and Health Law, professor of Christian Ethics, Utrecht University, Member of the European Group on Ethics of the sciences and new technologies.
Paul B. Thompson, Joyce and Edward Brewer distinguished professor, Department of Philosophy, Purdue University.
Cees Veerman, President of the Executive board Wageningen University and Research Center, President of the European Society for Agriculture and Food Ethics, EurSafe.
Raoul Weiler, Centre for Ethics on Agriculture, Life Sciences and the Environment, Catholic University Leuven.

Conferences

Funding Priorities for Applied Ethology in the New Millennium and Open Communications

December 1, 1999, International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE Winter Meeting), Royal Veterinary College, London, UK. Information: Dr Jon Day, ADAS Terrington, Terrington St Clement, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE34 4PW, UK, e-mail: Jon.Day@adas.co.uk, phone: + 44 15523 828621, fax: + 44 1553 827229.

Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Animal Ethics

December 3-4, 1999, University of Tuebingen, Chair for Ethics in the Life Science. Information: Silke Schicktanz, Universität Tübingen, Lehrstuhl für Ethik in den Biowissenschaften, Sigwartstr. 20. D-72076 Tübingen, Germany, e-mail: silke.schicktanz@uni-tuebingen.de

International Conference in Applied Ethics

December 28-30, 1999, Philosophy Department, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Information, Hon-lam Li (e-mail: honlamli@cuhk.edu.hk) or Kai-yee Wong (e-mail: wongg31k@cuhk.edu.hk).

Livestock Care Conference

January 12, 2000, Animal Welfare in Europe, North America and Alberta, Delta South, Edmonton, USA. Information: AFAC, phone + 1 403 9328050, e-mail: info@afac.ab.ca

Great Expectations - Modern Biotechnology for Society

January 19, 2000, Wageningen UR, The Netherlands, 3rd Symposium of Codon (Society of Bioprocess Engineering Students). Information, e-mail: symposium-codon@guest.pk.wau.nl, web-site: <http://www.come.to/codon>

The 20th Annual Ecological Farming Conference

January 19-22, 2000, Asilomar Conference Centre, Pacific Grove, California, USA. Conference Theme: "*Riding the Organic Wave: 20 Years on the Crest of Eco-Agriculture!*", organized by the Committee for Sustainable Agriculture. Information: CSA, 406 Main St., Suite 313, Watsonville, CA 95076, USA, phone: + 1 831 7632111, fax: + 1 831 7632112, web-site: www.csa-efc.org

Biotechnology - The Science and the Impact

January 20-21, 2000, The Hague, The Netherlands, organized by the American Embassy in the

Netherlands in cooperation with the Dutch Ministries of Economy, Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, and Public Health, Welfare and Sports. Themes: The Science of Biotechnology, Biotechnology and the Developing World, Implications for Society, and The Challenges. Information, e-mail: the.hague.office.box@mail.doc.gov

International Conference on Risk Analysis in Aquatic Animal Health

February 8-10, 2000, Paris, France. Information: Dr K Sugiura, OIE Secretariat, 12 Rue de Prony, 75017, Paris, France, phone + 33 1 44151888, fax + 33 1 42670987, e-mail: k.sugiura@oie.int, web-site: <http://allserv.rug.ac.be/~booghe/eas/conf/conf101.htm>

Functional Foods for EU Health in 2000

February 25-28, 2000, 4th Workshop Demonstration of the Nutritional Functionality of Probiotic Foods, FAIR CT96-1028, Rovaniemi, Finland. Information: Anna-Kristiina Kauppila, phone + 358 9 4565823, fax: + 358 9 4552103, e-mail: anna-kristiina.kauppila@vtt.fi, web-site: <http://www.vtt.fi/bel/new/rovaniemi/index.htm>

International Conference on Sustainable Agriculture in the Next Millennium

March 2000, the Impact of Modern Biotechnology on Developing Countries, Brussels, Belgium. Information: Olivier Christ, Project Coordinator, 29 rue Blanche, B-1060, Brussels, Belgium, phone + 32 2 5420182, fax 32 2 5375596, e-mail: olivier.christ@foeeurope.org, web-site: <http://www.foeeurope.org/biotechnology/about.htm>

Farming and Ranching for Profit, Stewardship, and Community

March 7-9, 2000, Portland, Oregon, USA. Information: Gina Hashagen, Department of Horticulture, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, USA, phone + 1 541 7375477, fax + 1 541 7373479, e-mail: hashageg@bcc.orst.edu, web-site: <http://wsare.usu.edu/2000/media.htm>

Annual British Society of Animal Science (BSAS) Meeting

March 20-22, 2000, Scarborough, UK. Information: BSAS, PO Box 3, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland, EH26 0RZ, phone + 44 131 4454508, fax + 44 131 5353120, e-mail: BSAS@ed.sac.ac.uk, web-site: <http://www.bsas.org.uk/meetings/annual.htm>

Biology: Challenges for the New Millennium

March 22-24, 2000, 51st Annual Meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, Washington DC, USA. Information, web-site: <http://www.aibs.org/meeting2000/index.html>

Nutrition and Schoolchildren

March 30, 2000, British Nutrition Foundation, London, UK. Costs between £45 and £90 to attend. Information: + 44 171 4046504.

Food Irradiation 2000

April 3-5, 2000, Commercializing a Food Safety Process for the New Millennium, Arlington, Virginia, USA. Information: Melanie Searle, phone + 1 207 7819800, fax + 1 207 7812150, e-mail: info@intertechusa.com, web-site: <http://www.intertechusa.com/site/conferences>

The Millennium International Children's Conference on the Environment

May 2000, Eastbourne, UK. In partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme. Information: phone + 44 1323 726622, web-site: <http://www.unep.org>

The American Consumer in the Changing Food System

May 3-5, 2000, Washington, DC, USA. Information, web-site: <http://www.umass.edu/ne165/upcoming.html>

Consciousness, Cognition and Animal Welfare

May 11-12, 2000, the UFAW symposium, Zoological Society of London's Meeting Rooms, London, UK. Information: Dr Stephen Wickens, UFAW, The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,

Herts AL4 8AN, UK, phone + 44 1582 831818, fax + 44 1582 831414, e-mail: wickens@ufaw.org.uk

Are Genes Us?

May 19-21, 2000, Society for Applied Philosophy Annual Conference 2000, Manchester, UK.
Information: Stephen Burwood, phone + 44 1482 346311, e-mail: s.a.burwood@phil.hull.ac.uk

Workshop Environmental Policy, Agriculture and Biotechnology

May 29-30, 2000, Rome, sponsored by the European Science Foundation, the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute and the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment. Papers for the Workshop must be submitted no later than January 31, 2000. More information or submission of manuscripts: Timothy Swanson, Professor of Environmental Policy (e-mail: Tim.Swanson@ucl.ac.uk) or Timo Göschl, Research Fellow (e-mail: T.Goschl@ucl.ac.uk), CSERGE, Department of Economics, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, UK, Fax: + 44 171 9162772.

Humans in the Land

Early June, 2000, Telemark College, Telemark, Norway. Information: Sven Arntzen, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Telemark College, 3800 Telemark, Norway, phone + 47 35 952741, fax + 47 35 952601, e-mail: sven.arntzen@hit.no

Millennial Stews: Food and Food Systems in the Global City

June 1-4, 2000, The Year 2000 Joint Annual Meeting of the ASFS and AFHVS, New York University, New York, USA. Information: Trish Lobenfeld, New York University, Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, 35 West 4th Street, 10th Floor, New York, USA, phone + 1 212 9985580, fax + 1 212 9954194, e-mail: food.conference@nyu.edu, web-site: <http://www.nyu.edu/education/nutrition/foodconference>

3rd Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference - ABIC 2000

June 5-8, 2000, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Information, web-site: <http://www.abic.net>

European Pesticide Residue Workshop: Pesticides in Food and Drink

July 3-5, 2000, York England, UK. Information: EPRW 2000 Secretariat, Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York, YO41 1LZ, UK, phone + 44 1904 462459, fax +44 1904 462253, e-mail: eprw2000@csl.gov.uk, web-site: <http://www.csl.gov.uk/news/level2/eprw3.htm>

6th International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms

July 8-13, 2000, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Information, web-site: <http://www.usask.ca/agriculture/biosafety/>

The Ethical Challenges of Globalization

July 19-23, 2000, Sao Paulo, Brazil, The Second World Congress of the International Society of Business, Economics, and Ethics (ISBEE). Information, web-site: <http://www.synethos.org/isbee/SecondWorldCongress.htm>

Human Healthcare - Sciences, Technologies, Values

August 23-26, 2000, Second World Congress of Philosophy of Medicine, Krakow, Poland, organized by the European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Health Care, the Central and East European Association of Bioethics, and the Department of Philosophy and Bioethics, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. Persons wishing to present papers at the congress should submit an abstract (500 words maximum) before February 1, 2000. Kindly send abstracts in hard copy and on diskette (WordPerfect or DOS/Sc) to the ESPMH Secretariat in Nijmegen: Prof. dr. Henk ten Have, Dept. of Ethics, Philosophy and History of Medicine, School of Medical Sciences, University of Nijmegen, PO Box 9101, 6500 HB Nijmegen, The Netherlands, phone + 31 24 3615320, Fax: + 31 24 3540254, E-mail: H.tenHave@efg.kun.nl

IFOAM 2000: The World Grows Organic

August 28-31, 2000, 13th International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements Scientific Conference, Basel, Switzerland. Includes 1st International Seminar on "*Organic Food Processing. Organic Food: How to Guarantee Premium Quality for the New Millennium*", August 29-30, 2000, as accompanying event. Information: IFOAM 2000, FiBL, Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick, Switzerland, phone + 41 62 8657297, fax + 41 62 8657273, e-mail: ifoam2000@fibl.ch, web-site: <http://www.ifoam2000.ch>

Valuing the Health Benefits of Food Safety

September 14-15, 2000, University of Maryland, USA. Information, web-site: <http://www.umass.edu/ne165/upcoming.html>

Fifth World Congress of Bioethics

September 21-24, 2000, Ethics, Law and Policy, Imperial College, London, UK. Deadline for submission of abstracts: January 31, 2000. Information: Anne Lavender, Centre for Ethics in Medicine, 73 St Michael's Hill, Bristol, BS2 8BH, UK, e-mail: anne.lavender@bristol.ac.uk, web-site: <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/ethics/fifthcon.htm>

2nd International Conference on Air Pollution from Agricultural Operations

October 9-11, 2000, Des Moines, Iowa, USA. Information: Bryan Shaw, Texas A&M University, phone + 1 409 8459793, fax + 1 409 8478828, e-mail: bw-shaw@tamu.edu

Courses

European Masters in Bioethics

March 2000 in Nijmegen (The Netherlands), September 2000 in Madrid (Spain), March 2001 in Leuven (Belgium), September 2001 in Padua (Italy). This course is organised by the Catholic University Nijmegen, the Catholic University Leuven, the Complutense University Madrid and the University of Padua. It is a 2-year Masters containing sixteen courses of one week. Five introductory courses provide a thorough introduction in medical and bio-ethics. The courses address specific themes like human and clinical genetics, assisted reproduction, public health and prevention, palliative care, research ethics, and ethics of care. Costs are 15,000 Euro. Information: Inez Uerz, Catholic University Nijmegen, phone + 31 24 3615320, e-mail: i.uerz@efg.kun.nl

Lectures on Agricultural and Food Ethics in 2000

Accademia dei Georgofili, Florence, Italy. Five lectures will be given on the following themes:

- * Ethical issues in agricultural and food production activities;
- * Professional ethics of the agricultural and food production operators and technicians;
- * Welfare and ethics issues in animal production;
- * Environmental ethics: relationship between agriculture and environmental protection, environment-friendly agriculture;
- * Food problems in the world: hunger, market and traditions.

The first lecture will be given by Dr. Frans W.A. Brom (Faculty of Theology at the Utrecht University, Secretariat of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics) and Academic Prof. Claudio Peri (University of Milan) in February 2000. Information: Prof. Claudio Peri, DISTAM, University of Milan, Via Celoria 2, 20133 Milano, Italy, e-mail: claudio.peri@unimi.it

Job Opportunities

Center for Ethics in Science, University of Tübingen, Germany

This center is looking for a *Graduate Research Assistant* for the documentation project "Ethics in Biotechnology" (ENDEBIT). The job is for 83 hours a month, and could start in January 2000. Goal of this project is the establishment of an Internet databank about ethical and juridical aspects in biotechnology for food, agriculture and environment. You should have studied Humanities or Philosophy. Knowledge of computers, and the German and English language is essential, French would be fine. Additionally, the position of *Documentary or Library Assistant* for the project "Ethics in Biotechnology" is also available in January 2000. It is an two-year fixed-term contract with possibility to prolong. Area of responsibility is to administrate and to be in charge of the Internet Databank ENDEBIT. Qualification for the job is an enclosed study of Documentation with special qualification in Thesaurus. Interests in ethics and/or science would be fine. Knowledge of the German language is a prerequisite, English additional. Information: Zentrum für Ethik in den Wissenschaften, Frank Wittmer Keplerstraße 17, D-72074 Tübingen, Germany, phone + 49 70 712977985/712977981, fax + 49 70 71295255, e-mail: zew.dokumentation@uni-tuebingen.de, web-site: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/zew>

Academic Groups

Wuppertal Institut für Klima, Umwelt, Energie

Döppersberg 19, D-42103 Wuppertal, Germany, phone + 49 202 24920, fax + 49 202 2492180, e-mail: info@wupperinst.org . You will find interesting information about "*Perspectives - Highlights of the German Marshall Fund Environmental Fellowship Program*" at: <http://www.wupperinst.org/Publikationen/Fellowship/index.html> . See also the European Consultative Forum for Sustainable Development and Environment, web-site: <http://www.wupperinst.org/Projekte/Umwelt/u12.html>

Social Organizations

Essential Trading Co-operative Ltd

Essential Trading Co-operative Ltd is a UK based workers co-operative that specialises in supplying Organic, GMO free and Fair Trade vegetarian wholefoods to independent businesses in the UK and abroad. Its trading objectives are defined by core ethical beliefs. Information, web-site: <http://www.essential-trading.co.uk/>

Euro Coop (European Community of Consumer Co-operatives)

Euro Coop is the European Community of consumer co-operatives. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels. Its members are the national organisation of consumer co-operatives in 13 of the 15 member states of the European Union and in 5 central and eastern European countries. Created in 1957, Euro Coop today represents over 3,200 local and regional cooperatives, the members of which amount to more than 19 million consumers in the EU and 2 million in the associated countries of central and eastern Europe. Information: Rue ArchimPde 17, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium, phone + 32 2 2850070, fax + 32 2 2310757, web-site: <http://www.eurocoop.org/home/en/>

Friends of the Earth European Biotechnology Programme

The overall objective of the FoEE Biotechnology Programme is to actively promote public understanding of the different applications and risks resulting from genetic engineering - especially in relation to agriculture and so-called novel foods - and thus to facilitate wider and more enlightened public participation in the development of the EU's biotechnology policy and legislation. Information:

Gill Lacroix, Biotechnology Programme, 29 rue blanche B-1060, Brussels, Belgium, phone + 32 2 5420182, fax + 32 2 5375596, e-mail: 100717.1155@compuserve.com, web-site: <http://www.foeeurope.org/biotechnology/about.htm>

Projects

Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission

In July 1999 the Office of Science and Technology sought applications for the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission. The Commission is being set up to, amongst other things, contribute to the preparation of advice as needed by UK ministers and to develop Commission policies on the ethical and social implication of developments in biotechnology. Information: Pat Sellars, phone + 44 171 2712100.

BioethicsLine

A database of bibliographic references concerning ethical and public policy issues in health care and biomedical research. It is produced by the Bioethics Information Retrieval Project at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, and is made available online through the MEDLARS computerized information system of the National Library of Medicine. A Bioethics Thesaurus is available for use with BIOETHICSLINE. Information, National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature, (800) MED-ETHX, web-site: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/faculty/research/bioethics/bio-line.html>

Ethical Perspectives on Food Biotechnology

A recently initiated project funded by the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. A central aim of the project is to engage researchers involved in food biotechnology research in dialogue and reflection on ethical issues and consumer attitudes. To further facilitate this, the aim is to establish a Centre for Bio-Ethics and Risk Assessment in cooperation with other projects for which funding has been applied. The project comprises three research projects. One sub-project aims to clarify and possibly improve the basis of risk assessment through analysis and evaluation of existing studies of risk assessment. Furthermore, there are two sociological sub-projects: one examines lay and expert attitudes to food biotechnology on the basis of qualitative individual in-depth interviews and group interviews, the other examines the role of NGOs in shaping the regulation of biotechnology by means of group interviews and document and media analysis. Project manager: Research professor, Peter Sandøe, Dept. Of Animal Science and Animal Health, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, 8 Grønnegårdsvej, DK-1870 Frederiksberg C, Denmark, phone + 45 35283059, fax + 45 35283022, e-mail: psand@coco.ih.ku.dk

Food Standards Act 1999

The Food Standards Bill to establish the Food Standards Agency in the UK, received Royal Assent on November 11, 1999 as the Food Standards Act 1999. This now provides the legal basis for setting up the Agency in Spring 2000. Further information about the Food Standards Agency can be obtained from the Consumer Helpline, MAFF, phone + 44 171 2386550, fax + 44 171 2386330, e-mail: consumer@info.maff.gov.uk

Public Perceptions of Agricultural Biotechnology in Europe (PABE)

Agricultural biotechnology is an important new field of technological innovation and commercial growth but there is already evidence of considerable, if ill defined, public anxiety about this unfamiliar though potentially beneficial new field. The PABE project has been funded by the European Commission under its FAIR (Fisheries and Agricultural) and ELSA (Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of the Life Sciences) research programmes. The project runs for two years and will report in July 2000.

The research has three overall objectives:

1. to explore and describe the factors shaping the various public views of agricultural biotechnologies and related food-products within five EU Member States (Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain);
2. to compare the salient factors and their influence on public views of agricultural biotechnologies across these five Member States;
3. to help identify the implications of these factors for policy making on agricultural biotechnology at national and European levels.

The aim is to provide intelligence on the social, ethical and cultural factors shaping public responses to agricultural biotechnology and GM foods that will be useful to a wide range of social partners in the policy process, including national and local governments, industry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and EU officials and decision-makers. To ensure that the policy implications are adequately addressed and disseminated, these social partners will be involved directly in the project through a series of interviews, workshops and related networking activities.

The research involves three components in all five countries:

1. Focus group discussions conducted with members of the public;
2. Interviews with key actors;
3. Workshops with stakeholders and potential users of the research.

The national research teams are making an interpretative analysis of the data collected. The results are the basis for subsequent cross-national comparison and analysis. The comparison of the results will explore whether national differences in social, cultural and economic contexts are significant factors in shaping public responses to new agricultural biotechnologies. The comparative analysis will examine how, if at all, these contextual factors influence public perceptions and the extent to which that contributes to differences between countries. The research will also pay particular attention to the extent of public trust in the institutions responsible for assessing and managing risks. We believe that trust, which we view as a complex, multi-dimensional social phenomenon, has a significant influence on public risk perceptions. Public experience of adjacent issues, such as BSE (or 'mad cow' disease) and other indirect factors (such as public views on the accessibility, transparency, scope and effectiveness of the expert advisory process) may influence levels of trust. In the course of the research we will explore and compare the influence of such factors across the five countries.

The research will investigate a number of other dimensions in addition to the overarching issue of trust, which is implicated in different ways in each of these themes. They include:

- * Public empowerment and participation in decision-making;
- * Ethical dimensions;
- * Socio-psychological factors;
- * Perceptions of the agriculture-food system;
- * Perceptions of science and technology;
- * Risk assessment procedures;
- * Experience of untrustworthy behaviour in related fields;
- * National and European regulation.

The PABE project will produce two main outputs:

1. it will generate fresh insights into the factors that influence public concerns about agricultural biotechnology;
2. it will evaluate their implications for agricultural biotechnology policy and, specifically, for the means by which better expression of public concerns could be facilitated in the policy and regulatory process.

These outputs are intended to contribute to the development of a democratically robust, sustainable and effective basis for technological choice and innovation. The results of the research will be disseminated to potential research users in government, industry and NGOs who may be seen as stakeholders in relation to the issue of agricultural biotechnology and GM foods, as well as through academic publications in the international research literature. Dissemination will include workshops with stakeholders, publications in practitioner-oriented journals, conference presentations, and personal interaction or involvement with stakeholder groups.

The National research teams:

- * Brian Wynne and Peter Simmons (project coordinators), Centre for the Study of Environmental

- Change, Lancaster University, United Kingdom;
- * Claire Marris, Martin O'Connor and Sylvie Faucheux, Centre d'Économie et d'Éthique pour l'Environnement et le Développement (C3ED), Université de Versailles-St Quentin, Yvelines, France;
 - * Bruna De Marchi, Programma Emergenze di Massa (PEM), Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale Gorizia (ISIG); Luigi Pellizzoni, ISIG and Università di Trieste; Myriam Lefebvre, EC Joint Research Centre, Institute of Systems, Informatics and Safety, Ispra; Anna Saba, Istituto Nazionale della Nutrizione, Roma; Maddalena Colombo, Università Cattolica di Milano e Brescia, Italy;
 - * Ortwin Renn, Florian Lattewitz and Gerhard Keck, Akademie für Technikfolgenabschätzung in Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart, Germany;
 - * Louis Lemkow, Angeles LizÚn, and Ramon Sentmart and Johanna Cceres, Departament de Sociologia i Centre d'Estudis Ambientals, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.

Information: Peter Simmons, Centre for the Study of Environmental Change, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YT, UK, phone + 44 1524 592658, fax + 44 1524 846339, e-mail: P.Simmons@lancaster.ac.uk

Stichting Consument en Biotechnologie

This Dutch organisation just finished a project on genetic engineering and food allergy. One of the final outputs is a 12 page bulletin reflecting the outcomes of a European workshop on May 18-19, 1999, and the personal views of some stakeholders. An electronic version of the full report of the workshop is also available at web-site: <http://www.biotech-info.net> . Information: Huib de Vriend, Postbus 1000, 2500 BA Den Haag, The Netherlands.

UK Animal Procedures Committee

Emerging Biotechnologies and the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The UK Animal Procedures committee seeks views on the effect of new and emerging biotechnologies on the use of and welfare of laboratory animals and other animals which are used in scientific procedures.

Questions

The committee has decided to seek further views from regulators, researchers, animal protection societies and others before offering the Home Secretary any more advice on these important issues. It has formulated some specific questions on which it would be grateful for comments, thought it would of course be very helpful to hear of any other points you would like to make:

- a) What scientific and technical developments, for example genetic modification and cloning, do you consider are likely to have an impact on the production, usage and welfare of animals in scientific procedures over the next few years?
- b) What kind of poor welfare, or actual suffering, might animals undergo as a result of their use in scientific procedures relating to these developments?
- c) Does the existing regulatory regime under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 impose satisfactory controls on the product and use of animals in research into, or involving, the emerging biotechnologies? Please explain your answer and, if you think that the existing controls are not satisfactory, indicate what changes or additional controls you would like to see;
- d) Does the existing regulatory regime under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 meet the legitimate needs of science and industry, and of the public, in emerging biotechnologies?

Please feel free to provide any other views you may have on these issues. The Committee has asked for comments by Monday January 31, 2000. Reply to the Animal Procedures Committee, Room 978, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AT, UK, phone + 44 171 2732915/2770, e-mail:

apc.secretariat@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk . Chris Bone (Secretary) will be happy to deal with any queries. The letter calling for comments has been placed on the APC's website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/animact/apchome.htm

Issues

Battle over GM Crops

Genetic engineers launched a counter-offensive in the battle over GM crops. Five scientists protest in *Nature*, the world's leading science journal, against a claim that genetically altered crops could not be regarded as safe until they had passed the toxicity tests used for new drugs. A team led by Erik Millstone of the University of Sussex argued in *Nature* that the idea GM plants would be chemically the same as conventionally bred plants was "pseudo-scientific". They also said there had been too few tests on Monsanto's herbicide-resistant soybean - and that the combination of a newly introduced gene and herbicide spray could have made the GM plant toxic. But Anthony Trewavas of the University of Edinburgh and Christopher Leaver of the University of Oxford called the argument "ill informed". They write that the same arguments could be applied to every new strain of conventionally bred crops. "Every new crop seed variety would have to be separately tested for toxicity when it has been treated with every herbicide, every pesticide, fertiliser variations, attack by every individual predator, infection with every individual disease and grown in an astronomically large number of different environmental combinations. We would be drowning in toxicity tests." They say the health and safety executive looked at the problem for 25 years and concluded "that GM food technology is one of the safest yet developed". Peter Kearns, of the organisation for economic cooperation and development in Paris, and Paul Mayers, of Health Canada, write that the disputed principle of "substantial equivalence" - whether GM food is chemically like its traditional "parent" food - was produced by 60 experts from 19 countries two years before any GM foods reached the shelves. It was endorsed by World Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation experts three years later. Derek Burke, once chairman of the government's advisory committee on novel foods, says the idea that there was "an international conspiracy to foist genetically modified foods on a gullible public is beyond belief". The idea that the combination of a herbicide and a herbicide-resistant gene could make a plant poisonous was "bizarre". "This food has been used commercially for four years, and 300 Americans are currently eating it with no sign of a problem. How could such a mish-mash of old hat sociology and poor science get published? *Nature*, in my view, damages its reputation by publishing such propaganda" (Source: Guardian).

Bt-engineered Crops Threaten Monarch Butterflies and Organic Farmers

Bt is a naturally-occurring soil bacterium that is toxic to some insects. It has been successfully used as a "natural" pesticide for almost 40 years by organic and small farmers who monitor their fields carefully enough to properly time its application. Recently crops have been genetically-engineered to express the Bt toxin, allowing conventional large-scale farmers access to Bt in the crops they plant. This year about 20 million acres of Bt corn has been planted. This threatens the effectiveness of the traditional spray application of Bt by small farmers. Unlike Bt spray - which breaks down quickly - Bt in crops will be continually present and over a vastly larger scale, thus encouraging the evolution of insects resistant to Bt (to try to negate this effect, Canadians require that Bt corn and non-Bt corn be interplanted). A recent laboratory study has shown that the pollen from Bt corn kills nearly half of the larvae of monarch butterflies who eat it. The American Corn Belt is an important habitat for the monarchs, which live on the milkweed plant found throughout the American Midwest.

Genetically Modified Crops in Italy

The Italian Minister of Agriculture, Paulo De Castro, introduced a moratorium on commercial tillage of genetically modified crops. His decision is especially important for two companies, Monsanto and Novartis, because they have been testing genetically modified wheats in Italy for years and planned to ask permission for commercial production in 2000. Biotechnologists reacted furiously on the Minister's decision, because the current testing period did not come to an end yet. De Castro announced his decision, without reasons, at the end of an environmental conference. In the meanwhile, the Italian police investigates over 200 food products of both Italian and foreign brands. People think that these products might possibly be made from non-approved genetically modified crops. The investigation covers the whole country and producers and distributors who obeyed EU labelling regulations risk sentences up to 3 years imprisonment.

RoundupReady Soybeans Not Heat-Resistant?

At a British Crop Protection Council meeting in Brighton, Bill Vencill of the University of Georgia reported problems with genetically modified, RoundupReady, soybeans of Monsanto. During two hot springs in Georgia, when the soil reached a temperature of 40° to 50° Celsius, the stems of the genetically modified crop started to split. Farmers suffered losses of up to 40%. Vencill and his research-team wanted to search for an explanation under laboratory conditions. Until a soil temperature of 25° Celsius the RoundupReady soybean grew just as well as conventional soybeans. With a higher soil temperature the effects became clearly visible. At a soil temperature of 45° Celsius almost all stems of Roundup Ready soybean split, whereas the percentage of splitting stems of the other plants was "only" 50-70%. Soybeans with a resistance against glufosinate suffered less from high temperatures. The same effect was also found under field conditions, but was initially seen as a result of fungi infections. According to Vencill the problems are directly caused by the applied genetic modification. Plants with a glyphosate-resistance-gen produce up to 20% more lignin. It seems that the CP4-EPSPS enzyme, responsible for the glyphosate-resistance, puts the lignin production in the 'overdrive'. Vencill suspects that this weakens the stems. If Vencill's thoughts are right, then would that have enormous consequences for the production of RoundupReady soybean in countries like Brazil, where Monsanto sees an important market for its soybeans. Monsanto would like to wait for a published paper in a reviewed academic journal before commenting on the issue.

Publications & Journals

Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag (TAB)

The Bureau of Technology Assessment at the German Parliament has interesting publications about sustainable development and biotechnology, e.g. *Forschungs- und Technologiepolitik für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung* (1998), *Gentechnik, Züchtung und Biodiversität* (1998). Information: Dr. Thomas Petermann, Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag (TAB), Neue Schönhauser Straße 10, D-10178 Berlin, Germany, phone + 49 30 284910, fax + 49 30 28491119, e-mail: buero@tab.fzk.de, web-site: <http://www.tab.fzk.de>

Die Evolution und der Naturschutz. Zum Verhältnis von Evolutionsbiologie, Ökologie und Naturethik

T. Potthast, Campus-Verlag, Frankfurt 1999.

Farm Animal Welfare - Who Writes the Rules?

BSAS Occasional Publication number 23. Proceedings of a symposium organised by the British Society of Animal Science held in Edinburgh, September 1998. Available from BSAS Publications, PO Box 3, Penicuik, Midlothian, EH25 0RZ, UK, for £24.50 or fax details to + 44 131 5353120.

Growing Concern - the Use of BST in Dairy Cattle

Report published by the RSPCA, 1999. Contact RSPCA, Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1HG, UK, fax + 44 1403 241048, e-mail: webmail@rspca.org.uk, web-site: <http://www.rspca.org.uk/content/news/BST.html>

Novel Foods: Beyond Nuffield

Report published by the Food Ethics Council, Southwell, Notts, UK, October 1999, Cost £10 UK, Overseas £12, phone + 44 1636 812622, fax + 44 7070 608802, e-mail: foodeth@globalnet.co.uk

Naturschutzethik – Eine Einführung in die Praxis

Eser, U. & T. Potthast, Nomos, Baden Baden 1999.

Der Naturschutz und das Fremde. Ökologische und normative Grundlagen der Umweltethik
U. Eser, Campus-Verlag, Frankfurt 1999.

The New Foods Guide

Elkington, J. & J. Hailes, Gollancz Paperback Original 1999 (isbn 057506806).

Organic Farming and Gene Transfer from Genetically Modified Crops

Catherine Moyes and Philip J Dale, John Innes Centre, Norwich, May 1999. For full text, see web-site: [http://www.gmissues.org/orgreport/gmissues\[1\].htm](http://www.gmissues.org/orgreport/gmissues[1].htm)

Strengthening Decision-making for Sustainable Development

Report published by the Office of Science and Technology, 1999. Contact Frans Berkhout, phone + 31 1273 678935. The report looks at difficult social, economic and environmental challenges faced by decision-makers.

The True Cost of Food

Report published by the Soil Association in association with Greenpeace, 1999. Bristol House, 40-56 Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6BY, UK, phone + 44 117 9290661, fax + 44 117 9252504, e-mail: info@soilassociation.org. The report concludes that UK agricultural policy can be characterised by 'irresponsible short-term priorities' and a failure to respond to public needs. The Soil Association reports that within the UK, Wales is setting the first ever target for converting farmland to organic production. The Welsh assembly and the Welsh Development agency are calling for 10% of agricultural land to be organic by 2005.

Biotechnology Discussion Papers Series

The Biotechnology and Development website of the Center for International Development at Harvard University has launched a discussion papers series at web-site:

<http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/research.htm>. This series includes the following papers:

- * *Agrobiotechnology Choices in Developing Countries*, Robert Paarlberg, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University;
- * *Biotechnology for Small-Scale Farmers: A Kenyan Case Study*, Matin Quaim, Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany;
- * *International Markets for Genetic Resources: Opportunities for Colombia*, Antonio B. Hill, World Foundation for Environment and Development, Washington, DC.

Guidelines for submitting discussion papers are at web-site:

<http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/discguidelines.htm>

A related policy paper is:

- * *Safe Use of Biotechnology*, Calestous Juma and Aarti Gupta, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, web-site: <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/pp/policy.htm>.

And for a biotechnology viewpoint, see:

- * *Controlling the Spread of Biotechnology*, Dr. Pietro Perrino, Director, Germplasm Institute, Italian National Research Council, Bari, Italy, web-site: <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/comments/comments59.htm>

Ethics and the Environment

An interdisciplinary forum for theoretical and practical papers, discussions, reviews, comments, and book reviews in the broad area of environmental ethics. This journal is supported by the Center for Humanities and Arts, the Philosophy Department, and the Environmental Ethics Certificate Program at the University of Georgia, and edited by Victoria Davion, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy. Information, web-site: <http://www.phil.uga.edu/eande/>

Journal of Environmental Biosafety

A projected new journal by Elsevier. Circulars and information: Dr. Klaus Ammann, Director Botanical Garden, University of Bern, Altenbergrain 21, CH-3013 Bern, Switzerland, phone + 41 31 6314937, fax + 41 31 6314993, e-mail: klaus.ammann@sgi.unibe.ch

Web Sites

<http://susdev.eurofound.ie>

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, information on sustainable development issues.

<http://www.globeint.org>

GLOBE (Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment), a site of green members of parliaments.

<http://www.thehungersite.com>

Click the hunger-site of the UN and someone somewhere will get food. It will cost you nothing, since the food is paid by sponsors advertising on the web-site. You can visit this site only once a day.

<http://www.oecd.org/subject/biotech>

OECD-site with information on debates with NGOs about GMOs and food safety.

<http://www.gene.ch>

Up-to-date information about genetics, ethics and politics from the GENET archive. Information, Hartmut Meyer, Coordinator GENET, The European NGO Network on Genetic Engineering, Reinhaeuser Landstr. 51, D-37083 Goettingen, Germany, e-mail: genet@agoranet.be

http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/zew/index_info.html

More than 200 links about ethics, biotechnology, medicine, politics and economy at the web sites of the Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen, Germany.

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~foodeth/reports.html>

Comments of The Food Ethics Council submitted to the Nuffield Council on Bioethics enquiry into Genetically modified crops: social and ethical issues. Information: Dr Ben Mepham, Executive Director, The Food Ethics Council, Minster Chambers, Southwell Notts, NG25 0HD, UK, e-mail: foodeth@globalnet.co.uk

<http://www.betterfoods.org>

The Alliance for better Foods launched a new website providing "fact-based information about how biotechnology benefits agriculture and food". The alliance is a coalition of 26 organisations, including the Grocery Manufacturers of America, the American Soybean Association and the USA Rice Federation.

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg12/biot1.html>

Programme Outline of the Biotechnology Programme of the European Commission.

<http://www.ecospherics.net>

A website for ecocentric literature operated by Ecospherics International. Information: Ted Mosquin, Box 279, Lanark, Ontario OK6 1KO, Canada, phone + 613 2674899, fax + 613 2648469, e-mail: mosquin@superaje.com

<http://maff.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/default.htm>

MAFF have launched a new Animal Welfare website giving details of their animal welfare policies.

EU News

Controversial New Law on Labelling

October 1999, The European Parliament called for changes to a controversial new law on which foods must be labelled as containing genetically modified (GM) ingredients. OECD holds consultations with NGOs on biotechnology and other aspects of food safety on November 20 1999. There are also web-sites for everyone to submit comments about food safety:
<http://www.oecd.org/subject/biotech>

Food Safety Agency

There have been a number of high-level pronouncements within the European Commission (EC, Brussels) heralding a new European Union (EU) wide food safety agency, an agency that would, among other things, almost certainly regulate foods containing genetically modified (GM) ingredients.

EurSafe

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Newsletter

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