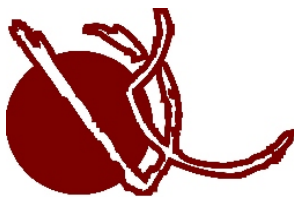


EurSafe News

European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics



**Volume 6, No. 1-2
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Contents:

Editorial / 1
Research project / 2
Open forum: Food Safety / 3
Conferences & Courses / 5
Books, Reports & Journals / 7
Vacant Positions / 7
EurSafe Information / 8

Editorial:

Invitation to contribute to EurSafe News

Some strategic decisions are recently made regarding the newsletter of EurSafe. The executive committee and the editorial board now invite all members and others to contribute to this publication, so it can better fulfil its aim as an important source of information about what is going on in the field of agricultural and food ethics, but at the same time become something more than purely an information conveyor.

by Geir Tveit

In a time when more and more sources of information including newsletters rely on the internet as the only way of distribution, the EurSafe executive committee has made the decision to print the organisation's newsletter on paper. This is not because the value of the internet is not appreciated. Hence, the *EurSafe News* will of course still be available in an electronic version at www.eursafe.org and the idea is to further integrate the website and the printed newsletter. It is planned – within our very limited resources – to let our website display more frequent updates of conference

lists, keep track of books listed in the newsletter, provide an easy link to documents and other websites referred to in the newsletter, etc. Hopefully, the website can also support the newsletter through bringing swift reactions to articles brought in the newsletter and other debate and opinions.

However, the daily situation among the majority of the members is judged to be so that many have reached the point of being swamped by an overabundance of information through e-mail, newsgroups and other electronic distribution. It is not

only the fear of viruses that make many dump e-mails without opening the attachments, but simply that they receive too many. Therefore, we think that a small, physical publication in hand – to read in the train or in bed – is preferable. With the option, of course, for members to choose the electronic version only.

This issue presents an early and unfinished version of the new style of EurSafe News. Comments are more than welcome as is content material. Then we hope to present an improved version as No.3 to the EurSafe Congress in Leuven 2-4 September.

Research Project:

The Development of Ethical Bio-Technology Assessment Tools for Agriculture and Food Production

“The Development of Ethical Bio-Technology Assessment Tools for Agriculture and Food Production” (QLG6-CT-2002-02594) is a project under the Fifth Framework Programme of the European that started in 2003.

by Volkert Beekman

The general objective of “Ethical Bio-TA Tools” is to develop and improve tools for the ethical assessment of new technologies in agriculture and food production in general and modern biotechnologies in particular. This general objective is divided in three substantial sub-objectives of developing and improving:

- Ethical decision-making frameworks to facilitate regulatory decision-making about modern biotechnologies;
- Participatory arrangements to facilitate public opinion-formation about ethical aspects of modern biotechnologies;
- Ethical benchmarking to facilitate moral communication about modern biotechnologies between economic actors in the food chain.

Experimental approach and working method

The Ethical Bio-TA Tools work plan is broken down in three substantial work packages (WPs):

- WP1 (Ethical decision-making frameworks) aims at the development of practical decision-making frameworks to assist public decision-makers map and consider the ethical dimensions of animal and plant biotechnologies. It builds on earlier work that focused on the development of a framework known as the “ethical matrix”. This approach is critically analysed and compared with other emerging methods, such as those based on multi-criteria mapping.
- WP2 (Consensus conferences) aims at the development and improvement of participatory arrangements to facilitate public opinion-formation about the ethical aspects of modern biotechnologies in animal and plant breeding. It includes an assessment of existing participatory arrangements, particularly consensus conferences, in different European countries. A checklist is developed of what should be done and considered to achieve the established goals of particular participatory arrangements.
- WP3 (Benchmarking) aims at the development of ethical tools to facilitate moral communication about modern biotechnologies between economic actors in the food chain in order to gain trustworthiness in the eyes of consumers. It includes conceptual analysis and translation of the ethical notions of trust, responsibility and care from medical and political fields of application to agriculture and food production, and develops frameworks for

communication between the respective experts in food chain management and agricultural and food ethics.

Achievements and results

The three substantial work packages delivered interim reports from their first descriptive tasks. These descriptive interim reports may be summarised as:

- WP1 has produced a map of the use of ethical frameworks applied in biotechnology assessment procedures.
- WP2 has produced an overview of the most common participatory arrangements, including consensus conferences.
- WP3 has made a description of several existing tools and other stepping-stones that might be helpful in developing tools for facilitating moral communication between economic actors in the food chain.

Participants

The following partners participate in Ethical Bio-TA Tools:

- Agricultural Economics Research Institute, The Hague, The Netherlands;
- National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology, Oslo, Norway;
- Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment, Copenhagen, Denmark;
- Ethics Institute, Utrecht, The Netherlands;
- Centre for Applied Bioethics, Nottingham, United Kingdom;
- University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland.

More information

is available at the project's website: <http://www.ethicalbiotatools.wur.nl> or may be asked from the co-ordinator of the project: volkert.beekman@wur.nl.

Open Forum:

Food Safety:

Ethical thinking can facilitate dialogue

Experts and ordinary citizens view hazards lurking in the food differently. Ethical thinking can, however, contribute to an improved public dialogue about how to make priorities concerning the resources spent on enhancing food safety.

by Peter Sandøe and Karsten Klint Jensen

Researchers from the Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment have, in a recently completed study, focused on how experts and ordinary people perceive the risks of salmonellosis and other food-borne zoonoses, i.e. diseases which are spread through food from animals to humans. The professionals involved in combatting zoonoses do not see any obvious ethical problems connected to their work. Typically, they are of the opinion that, above all, their work is about securing the health of the population in the best possible way within the frames of the available resources. To them, the risk can be expressed in the simple formula: *risk = effect*

x probability. This means that when risk related to a certain zoonosis is to be assessed, two issues will have to be considered. Firstly, how serious are the consequences when an individual is infected, and secondly, what is the probability of an individual being infected. Hence, it is possible to compare serious conditions with less serious ones.

As part of the study both zoonosis specialists and ordinary citizens without any particular connection to food production or food research were interviewed. Among the experts there was a broad consensus about the view that the resources used in Denmark to prevent the very serious food-borne illness, variant Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease (vCJD), are totally disproportionate to the real risk. Even if the disease is serious, the probability of someone contracting it is extremely small, hence the risk according to the above-mentioned formula is also very small. A few of the experts were, however, more cautious when assessing the efforts to combat BSE because of the scientific uncertainty about our understanding of how mad cow disease can be transferred from animals to humans.

"A political disease"

The following quotations from the expert interviews may give an impression of how most of the experts look upon the risk concerning BSE:

Expert 1: "As far as I know it is something about five hundred million kroner [67 mill. Euro] we use only in Denmark to combat BSE, and theoretically the probability that we will get one single occurrence in humans is about 0,1 %. So, we are typically driven by media and communication problems and always driven far out, you know, when this kind of money could've given many times more if we had concentrated on the real risks. It is a story to learn a lot from."

Expert 2: "Listen, cases of Creutzfeld-Jacob have not yet to my knowledge been proven in Denmark. And I see it very much as a political problem. As professionals we have great difficulties in seeing that spending so many resources on that risk is reasonable."

Expert 3: "... BSE, which I think is a vast political disease. We have had two million infected cattle in England with clinical outbreak of BSE. We have about 100 people who have become ill. The assessment is enormously exaggerated if one looks upon the case in strictly scientific terms. It is a political disease which costs billions and billions – drains totally. We can just remove the risk material from the brain stem and the backbone and then we will have achieved what is needed. It is totally out of proportion."

As it appears from the latter two quotations, the experts are fully aware that the use of the large sums on combatting BSE is the result of a political priority. Hence, they also acknowledge the existence of other agendas regarding combatting zoonoses than their own implicit aim to get the most health out of the total money spent.

Action and despair

The contours of an alternative agenda appear through the interviews with ordinary citizens. These citizens constitute a much more diverse group than the experts do, which is quite natural as the interviewed experts to a large extent possess the same educational background, attend the same conferences, etc. Nevertheless, ordinary consumers voice a series of views which are contrary to the

expert views.

Firstly, ordinary people look very gravely upon the possibility of being infected by deadly diseases through their food. To many the conclusive point is that vCJD in contrast to salmonellosis and other more common food-borne diseases is an invariably dreadful, incurable and deadly disease. Another important point is, as the following quotation shows, that when it comes to Salmonella each individual has a possibility to take precautions:

"[BSE/vCJD] is probably most problematic as it is something in the meat which you can't avoid. I can avoid Salmonella by cooking the meat properly and sterilize the tools when I have prepared the meat; and the eggs also ... I can avoid eating lightly boiled eggs ..."

Contrary to this the risk from threats one cannot fight oneself is perceived of as a variety of an involuntary Russian roulette. Here one depends totally on others:

"I can do something about Campylobacter and Salmonella myself. Here ... [i.e. where there is no possibility of controlling personally] I feel powerless. So, there are the lotteries regarding Listeria and botulism. [...] BSE – I really hope they have control over that, but anyway I don't feel very touched by it."

The finding that experts and ordinary people view risks differently is not new. Psychologists and sociologists have studied this phenomenon for decades. It appears from the many studies made concerning topics like nuclear power, pesticides and gene technology that the perception of risk among ordinary people has multiple dimensions, contrary to experts' more precise, but one-dimensional formula: $risk = effect \times probability$.

Important elements of the non-expert understanding of risk are *familiarity* (is this a danger we are used to live with or is it new and unfamiliar), *reversibility* (if anything happens, is there a chance of treatment/relief/reduction of damage or is the outcome certain death), *controllability* (can I, myself, do anything to protect myself and my family) and *justice* (is this a risk I have chosen to run or is it a risk others have imposed on me without my consent). When comparing vCJD with salmonellosis it can be argued that there are contrasts regarding all four of these dimensions. Having this in mind, it becomes more understandable that experts and lay people can

view risks related to food-borne diseases differently. The difference is not only founded in different levels of knowledge, but there is also a profound difference in perceptions of which elements are crucial when regarding a risk.

... and ethics

There is an obvious danger of the experts not hitting their target group when trying to inform about risks, as the two parts, as illustrated, are not emphasizing the same elements of a risk. To avoid this, the experts must realize that they are not merely professionals, but represent an ethical standpoint as well. By only focusing on getting the most health out of the money available they are leaning tightly onto a utilitarian ethics tradition, while, to a certain degree, the multi-dimensional risk concept can be interpreted as an expression of alternative ethical lines of thought. Hence, a central issue of critique in the discussion about utilitarianism is that making priorities on behalf of the common good can lead to someone being forced to bear burdens they have not themselves asked for. This can be in conflict with regards to justice. A focus on

controllability on the other hand can be seen as an expression of an ethical line of thought emphasizing the freedom and responsibility of each individual.

To translate risk into ethics is not a purely academic idea. The point is more that ethics is always subject to discussion. Then a basis is created to transform information about risk to a dialogue about risk, so that other people than experts can be included in the deliberations on how to make priorities among efforts to protect the consumers against food-borne diseases in the best and most just way.

The research project *Risk perception of zoonoses in Denmark* was financed by Danish Bacon & Meat Council and Norma & Frode S.Jacobsen's Foundation.

This article is printed in Danish in *Bio-etik i praksis*, No.1, 2004 (News from the Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment) and translated by Geir Tveit. It builds upon a manuscript which is submitted to an academic journal. Other results of the project is published in an academic review paper:

Hansen, Janus; Lotte Holm; Lynn Frewer; Paul Robinson & Peter Sandøe (2003): Beyond the knowledge deficit: recent research into lay and expert attitudes to food risks. *Appetite* 41:111-121.

Conferences & Courses

2004

Jul 11-14

ISEE 2004. Challenging Boundaries: Economics, Ecology and Governance (Montréal - Canada)

8th Biennial Scientific Conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE).

www.iseemontreal2004.com/main_menu.htm

Jul 11-15

European Agriculture in a Global Context. VIII European Society for Agronomy (ESA) Congress (Copenhagen - Denmark)

www.esacopenhagen2004.kvl.dk/

Sven-Erik Jacobsen: seja@kvl.dk

Jul 23

The Ethics of Global Warming (Cardiff - UK) Cardiff University.

www.cf.ac.uk/encap/philosophy/ethics/

Debbie Evans: EvansDD@cf.ac.uk

Jul 24-28

American Dairy Science Association National Meeting (Cincinnati. OH - USA)

Jul 25-29

The 2004 Joint Annual Meeting of the ADSA, ASAS and PSA (St.Louis, Missouri - USA)

The Federation of Animal Science Societies (FASS) is coordinating the meeting of the American Dairy Science Association, American Society of Animal Science and the Poultry Science Association

www.fass.org/2004/default.asp

Jennifer Gavel: tel: 217-356-3182, ext 39;

jennig@assochq.org

Aug 1-4

American Society of Agricultural Engineers Annual Meeting (Ottawa - Canada)

Aug 3-7

38th International Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE) (Helsinki - Finland)

www.isae2004.org/news.html

Marjatta Sihvonen: tel: +358 3 4188 2225;
marjatta.sihvonen@mtt.fi

Aug 25-28

Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of Human Genetic Databases (Reykjavik - Iceland)

www.elsagen.net/conference

Ms Gardara Arnason: gardara@hi.is

Aug 25-28

Euroscience Open Forum 2004: Highlighting Science, Technology and Innovation in Europe (Stockholm - Sweden)

www.esof2004.org/index.asp

Gabriella Norlin: tel: +46 8 546 44 154
gabriella.norlin@esof2004.org

Aug 30

Genomics Momentum 2004 (Rotterdam - The Netherlands)

www.genomics.nl/genomics_momentum_2004

Sep 2-4

EurSafe 2004: Science, Ethics and Society (Leuven - Belgium)

5th Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics
www.kuleuven.ac.be/cabme/

Sep 5-8

EAAP 2004. 55th Annual Meeting of the European Association for Animal Production (Bled - Slovenia)

A session on 'Ethical Issues in Animal Agriculture' on 7 September will contribute to the theme of the meeting "Sustainability of Livestock"
www.bfro.uni-lj.si/EAAP2004 and www.eaap.org
Contact: marie@ensaia.inpl-nancy.fr

Sep 12-15

ABIC 2004: AbBiotech goes Europe (Köln - Germany)

Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference
www.abic2004.org/htdocs/about_01.html
Lucille Richardson, tel: +1 306 683 2242;
abic@abic.net

Sep 13-18

Biology, Sustainable Development, Ethics and Citizenship. BIOED 2004 (Rio de Janeiro - Brazil)

www.iubs.org/test/BioEd%202004/frBioEd2004.htm

Sep 21-22

Corporate Social Responsibility In the Food Industry: Measuring, Managing and Reporting Responsible Business Practice (London - UK)

<http://www.agra-net.com>

Sep 26-28

Animal Ethics: New Frontiers, New Opportunities (Sydney - Australia)

Organised by ANZCCART - Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Training
www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART

Sep 26-30

8th International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (Montpellier - France)

Organised by the International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR).
www.inra.fr/qmobiosafety/index.php

Sep 27- Oct 1

The III World Conference on Bioethics (Cuenca - Spain)

Organised by the International Society of Bioethics. Topics: The Problems with Water Shortage and Contamination; Information and Manipulation; Research and Use of Stem Cells
www.sibi.org/3congreso/ingles/p1.htm

Sep 28

The ethics of patenting genes and stem cells (Copenhagen - Denmark)

<http://www.etiskraad.dk/sw3246.asp>

Oct 4-7

Agriculture Congress: Innovations Towards Modernised Agriculture (Melaka - Malaysia)

www.agri.upm.edu.my/congress/

Oct 11-12

Ecological stock-raising: The present and the future (Lithuania)

Lithuania Veterinary Academy, Department of Social Sciences
E-mail: zoohiq@lva.lt or socmok@lva.lt
Tel: +370 37363722 (Laima Matuliene)

Oct 14-16

American Embryo Transfer Association Annual Meeting (Tampa. FL - USA)

Oct 20-23

Biotechnologies for Quality. Aquaculture Europe 2004 (Barcelona - Spain)

Organised by the European Aquaculture Society
www.easonline.org/agenda/en/AquaEuro2004/default.asp

Oct 20-24

The Role of Multi-Purpose Agriculture in Sustaining Global Environment (Udine - Italy)

Organised by the University of Udine
www.dpvta.uniud.it/Eventi.htm

Oct 22-24

Ethics and the Life Sciences. (Delaware - USA)

Sponsored by the American Philosophical Association, the University of Delaware, and the Delaware Biotechnology Institute
www.apa.udel.edu/apa/opportunities/conferences/2004/oct/ethics.html

Nov 9 -12

7th World Congress of Bioethics (Sydney - Australia)

The International Association of Bioethics (IAB), University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. The theme of the Congress is 'Deep Listening:'

Bridging Divides in Local and Global Ethics'
www.bioethicsworldcongress.com/
Event Coordinator, tel: +61 9385 3503;
info@bioethicsworldcongress.com

Dec 6-7
**Scientists Center for Animal Welfare (SCAW)
Winter Conference (San Antonio, Texas - USA)**
www.scaw.com/winter%20conference.htm

2005

Aug 21-24
**Bringing Genomes to Life. ECB12: 12th
European Congress on Biotechnology
(Copenhagen - Denmark)**
Organisers: the Danish Biotechnology Forum and
the Danish Society for Biochemistry and Molecular
Biology on behalf of the European Federation of
Biotechnology
www.ecb12.dk/
Lars Haastrup Pedersen: lh@bio.auc.dk

Books, Reports & Journals

New books

Food Law: Policy & Ethics by Dominique
Lauterburg; Intl. Specialized Book Service Inc; 2nd
edition (June 2004) ISBN: 1859418813

**Food for Life: The Spirituality and Ethics of
Eating** by L. Shannon Jung; Augsburg Fortress
Publishers; (May 2004) ISBN: 0800636422

Animal Rights, Human Wrongs by Tom Regan;
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (May 2004)
ISBN: 0742533549

**Animal Rights: Current Debates and New
Directions** by Cass R. Sunstein, Martha Craven
Nussbaum; Oxford University Press; (March 2004)
ISBN: 0195152174

Recently published

**Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences
Nutrition and Health** by Marion Nestle; University
of California Press; (September 2003) ISBN:
0520240677

The Animal Ethics Reader by Susan J.
Armstrong, Richard G. Botzler (Editor), Susan
Armstrong, Richard Botzler; Routledge; 1 edition
(August 2003) ISBN: 041527589X

**Food, Inc. : Mendel to Monsanto--The Promises
and Perils of the Biotech Harves** by Peter

Pringle; Simon & Schuster; (June 2003) ISBN:
0743226119

**The Ethics of Diet: A Catena of Authorities
Deprecatory of the Practice of Flesh-Eating** by
Howard Williams, Carol J. Adams; University of
Illinois Press; (May 2003) ISBN: 0252071301

**How We Eat: Appetite, Culture, and the
Psychology of Food** by Leon Rappoport; ECW
Press; (May 2003) ISBN: 1550225634

**Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and
Bioterrorism** (California Studies in Food and
Culture, 5) by Marion Nestle; University of California
Press; (March 2003) ISBN: 0520232925

**Intellectual Property Rights and the Life Science
Industries: A 20th Century History** (Globalization
& Law S.) by Graham Dutfield; Ashgate Publishing
Limited, 2003. ISBN: 0754621111

**Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial
Agriculture** by Andrew Kimbrell (Ed.); Island Press;
(July 2002) ISBN: 1559639415

Den politiserte maten [In Norwegian] by Eivind
Jacobsen, Reidar Almås & Jahn Petter Johnsen;
Abstrakt forlag; (2003) ISBN: 8279350810

**Dyrevern eller samfunnsvern? Dyremishandling
som lovbrudd og lovydig handling** [In
Norwegian] by Guri Larsen; Unipub forlag; (2003)
ISBN: 8274771567

Vacant Positions

Vacancy for two post doc researchers in Food Ethics

Applied Philosophy, Wageningen University,
Netherlands, is involved in two European
projects of the 6th framework. We are looking
for two postdoc researchers from July 2004 to
November 2006, with Philosophy (ethics)
and/or Communication Science as education.

For both vacancies, information can be given
by Prof. dr. M. Korthals, Professor Applied
Philosophy, Social Sciences, Wageningen
University, Hollandseweg 1, 6706 KN
Wageningen, Netherlands
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Have you remembered to register for the 5th EurSafe Congress
in Leuven, Belgium, 2-4 September?

See: www.kuleuven.ac.be/cabme/

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Deadline for the next issue: 10 August 2004