

EurSafe News

European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics



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Conference Report

Societal aspects of agri-biotechnology – report from a transdisciplinary conference in Munich

Different aspects affecting public acceptance of agri-biotechnology were presented and discussed at the institute Technology-Theology-Natural sciences (TTN) in Munich 4.-14. October 2005. Scientists of various disciplines discussed societal aspects of transgenic plants in agriculture, and views of nature, perceptions of risk and benefit, the lack of personal experience with genetically modified foods, attitudes towards technology, trust in institutions, cultural backgrounds and misconceptions about food production were all identified as important issues.

by Gernot Prütz

The conference was supported by the German federal ministry of education and research, and the participants were sociologists (Jürgen Hampel, Magda Sawicka, Peter Peters,

Michael Zwick), psychologists (Heinz Gutscher, Joachim Scholderer), philosophers (Bernhard Irrgang, Franck Meijboom), a theologian (Christina aus der Au), an economist (Philip Aerni), agriculturists (Rüdiger Grass, Christian Schüler), an ecotrophologist (Jutta Zeddies), biologists (Gabriele Krczal, Jorge Mayer, Ingo Potrykus, Helge Torgersen, Gerhard Wenzel) and a jurist (Caroline-Ann Schlösser). Some of the issues deemed important by the participants are summarized below.

As the food industry is still reluctant to offer GM foods, the consumer does not have any personal experience with them. As a consequence, possible benefits are perceived as abstract (while risks are considered to be concrete). If GM foods were offered, positive personal experiences would be possible and the consumer might attribute personal benefits to GM foods, which would increase public acceptance. In fact, it was shown that sensory information from high-quality GM foods may »overwrite« GMO-sceptical attitudes. In contrast, technical and biological information on GM food may even lead to rejection, activating GMO-sceptical attitudes.

The »Aristotelian« view of nature is another factor reducing acceptance of agri-biotechnology. Nature is considered to carry its telos within itself. Thus, »nature« is a so-called »thick concept« as it is used both in a descriptive and prescriptive context. From this point of view, genetic engineering appears as »manipulative« and »artificial«. Consequently, the wish to »eat food without genes« should be translated into the longing for more »natural food«. The lack of biological knowledge is only a minor issue.

At this point of the discussion, a biologist criticized the consumer for believing in myths about food production. The sociologists replied that these misconceptions are produced by the marketing departments of the food industry itself.

Trust is another important factor. Modern technologies are far too complex to be easily understood. So many people neither have the time nor the motivation to understand them. However, complexity may be reduced by trusting proponents or opponents of agri-biotechnology. So trust may influence the attitude towards this technology. On the other hand, only those are considered as trustworthy, who share the same values with the

consumer. Thus, attitudes influence trust. In short, both variables seem to be inter-correlated.

Trust may also be considered in a much broader sense: if trust into political, economic and scientific institutions in general is high, the consumer will tend to accept agri-biotechnology. In this case, there exists a true cause-to-effect relationship, where trust is the independent (exogenous) variable, because institutions are active in so many different fields, that a reverse relationship appears improbable. In fact, a high level of trust in institutions in general is associated with high levels of trust in the USA. Exogenous variables, such as trust in institutions in general and views of nature in turn are determined by the cultural background.

As the EU regulatory process of transgenic plants is very time-consuming and costly, there are only a few international companies which can afford to develop them. Consequently, concerns of the public, that farmers will depend on just a few companies when growing transgenic plants, are intensified.

During the second week of the conference, the issues indicated above were combined into a »map« revealing the main »pathways« leading to acceptance or rejection of agri-biotechnology.

Organizing and moderating this conference was a challenge. Some contributors were inclined to discuss primarily, how acceptance of agri-biotechnology could be increased. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that some of the factors discussed in the course of the conference, such as »trust« and »value-similarity« also affected the attitudes of the speakers towards agri-biotechnology.

The main contributions will be available in June 2006. Please contact me for further information.

Gernot Prütz
Institut TTN
Marsstr. 19
80335 München, Germany
gernot.pruetz@elkb.de
<http://www.ttn-institut.de/>

EurSafe Congress 2006

The 6th EurSafe Congress in Oslo 21-24 June will attract researchers from a wide range of disciplines and from many different research milieus. 138 abstracts were submitted and the majority of the authors have got the green light for extending their abstracts and presenting their papers at the congress.

The authors of the 138 submitted abstracts represent research institutions and other organisations in 23 different countries, dominated by Norway, The Netherlands, Great Britain and Denmark. And not only European countries are represented. Particularly the contact with North American researchers seems to be strengthened this year.

The congress is organised by The National Committees for Research Ethics, Norway in cooperation with the University of Oslo, and the congress venue is the university campus at Blindern, close to the city centre of Oslo.

The themes of the congress include:

Sustainability in food production; Politics of consumption; Emerging technologies in food production; Animal welfare and production; Critical issues in aquatic production systems; The toolbox for assessing ethical issues; Foundational issues in philosophy / ethics; Social conflicts over resource management; Politics and power in the globalised food chain; Politics, nutrition and food safety; Ethics and safety in food discourses; Who's responsible? Corporate responsibility and political governance in relation to food ethical issues; Cultural values in food production; Social distribution of responsibility for food ethical issues; Trust in food; Food, health and social inequality.

Among the keynote speakers are: Michelle Micheletti, Vittorio Höhle and Paola Cavalieri.

More information and registration at <http://eursafe2006.etikkom.no/>

New Website

Ethical Tools

January 1, 2006, the website <http://www.ethicaltools.info/> has been launched. This website presents a set of ethical tools as developed by the project Ethical Bio-TA Tools as funded by the European Commission, DG Research, under FP5, Quality of Life Programme. This project has been a joint endeavour of the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (The Hague, The Netherlands), the National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (Oslo, Norway), the Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment (Copenhagen, Denmark), the Ethics Institute (Utrecht, The Netherlands), the Centre for Applied Bioethics (Nottingham, United Kingdom) and the University of Basle (Basle, Switzerland). The website has the following structure:

- Definition – What are ethical tools? This section presents the project's working definition of ethical tools;
- Selection – How to choose ethical tools?

This section presents information on how to decide upon the application of some ethical tool;

- Utilisation – How to use ethical tools? This section presents detailed instructions on how to use the respective ethical tools;
- Justification – How to justify ethical tools? This section presents a philosophical justification of the developed ethical tools;
- More information – This section presents some further information about the project Ethical Bio-TA Tools and the developed ethical tools;
- Links – This section presents links to the websites of the participants in the project Ethical Bio-TA Tools;
- Contact – This section presents contact details for those interested in receiving any further information about the presented ethical tools.

Further information <http://www.ethicaltools.info/> or volkert.beekman@wur.nl

New Magazine

I am delighted to announce that we have published the first issue of the *Bulletin of the Food Ethics Council*, our new quarterly magazine for subscribers.

The bulletin seeks to air dissenting views, challenge accepted opinion and spark fruitful debate about key developments in food and farming. Each issue features news and analysis from people actively involved in producing food or shaping policy.

The theme of this first issue is 'Negotiations', with articles on topics ranging from trade justice to organic fish farming, via climate change, supermarkets, chickens and investors. Contributors include Jenny Jones (Chair of London Food, formerly Deputy Mayor of London), Dino Adriano (formerly CEO, Sainsbury's), Geoff Tansey (author of 'The food system: a guide'), Craig Sams (founder, Green & Blacks Organic Chocolate), Devinder Sharma (New Delhi-based trade policy analyst), Bill Vorley (IIED) and Nick Robins (Henderson Global Investors). The full contents can be found below.

You can download the launch issue at www.foodethicscouncil.org/bulletin. Electronic access to future issues will be restricted.

I invite you to subscribe. Our subscription service is intended to help individuals and organisations keep abreast of developments and debates in food and farming. As well as the bulletin, subscribers receive copies of our printed publications, an invitation to an annual event and a discount on Earthscan books. Rates start from £15. Details can be found at <http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/subscribe/subscribe>.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards

Tom MacMillan

Food Ethics Council

39 – 41 Surrey Street

Brighton BN1 3PB UK

+44 (0) 1273 766 654

+44 (0) 1273 766 653

info@foodethicscouncil.org

<http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/>

Bulletin of the Food Ethics Council – Spring '06

Theme: Negotiations

Contents:

- Dispatches from Hong Kong
Geoff Tansey, Devinder Sharma, Patrick Mulvany and John Turner provide critical views on the recent world trade talks
- Bargaining for a future
Jenny Jones takes some tips from London's Sustainable Food Strategy
- Talk to the hand?
Laura Davis worries practical lessons for policy makers are falling deaf ears
- Pooling forces
Bill Vorley thinks beyond a stalemate in supermarket-stakeholder negotiations
- Supermarket sweepstake
Tough negotiation is par for the course, argues Sue Haddleton
- Values for money
Dino Adriano asks whether supermarkets can respond better to consumer desires
- Fish farming's ethical hitches
Michele Field reports from the Soil Association conference
- Organic chemistry
Craig Sams compares the carbon costs of different forms of agriculture
- Accidental lesson
After a lorry crashes Jo Murphy-Lawless extracts a message from the mess
- Capital concerns
Nick Robins introduces us to the City
- Plus:
News
Reading
Upcoming events

Conferences & Meetings

2006

Apr 26-29

New Life Sciences: Changing Lives. BioVision Alexandria 2006 (Alexandria - Egypt)

Including sessions for Agriculture, Food, Environment and Third World Issues.

<http://www.bibalex.org/bioalex2006conf/>

Apr 27-29

Global Ethics 2006. What is Global Ethics and How to Research it?" (Ghent - Belgium)

International Conference on Global Ethics, Ghent University,

Hosted by the Center for Ethics & Value Inquiry (CEVI) at Ghent University, Belgium, the conference brings together scholars in various disciplines (philosophy, ethics, sociology, geography, international relations, anthropology, political science) on the theme of 'global ethics'. The aim of the conference is to create a forum where various approaches and issues in researching 'Global Ethics' are discussed.

<http://www.cevi-globalethics.be/page.php?FILE=subject&LAN=E&ID=265&PAGE=1>

May 3-4

The 1st IFOAM Conference on Organic Wild Production (Banja Luka - Bosnia-Herzegovina)

http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/IFOAM_Wild_Conference.html

May 9-13

Aqua 2006 (Florence - Italy)

Organised by the European Aquaculture Society in collaboration with European Commission (DG Research and DG Fish)

<http://www.was.org/meetings/ConferenceInfo2.asp?MeetingCode=AQUA2006>

May 14-18

VALDOR - VALues in Decisions On Risk (Stockholm - Sweden)

The symposium is arranged to support the further development of transparent risk management. The organizers take a holistic and democratic approach to societal decision-making in complex issues which almost always include risk related matters

www.congrex.com/valdor2006

May 22-23

The Humane Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research (St Louis, Missouri - USA)

Organised by the Scientists Center for Animal Welfare, SCAW

<http://www.scaw.com/scaw%20ag%20conference.pdf>

May 22-24

CEFood 2006. 3rd Central European Congress on Food (Sofia - Bulgaria)

<http://www.cefood.org/>

May 30-31

Organic Farming and European Rural Development. Joint Organic Congress 2006 (Odense - Denmark)

The congress will examine what research in organic food and farming can offer in regard to the development of agriculture and food production, rural development and environmental protection in Europe.

<http://www.organic-congress.org/>

Jun 2-4

13th Congress on Alternatives to Animal Testing (Linz - Austria)

10th Annual Meeting of MEGAT - Middle European Society for Alternative Methods to Animal Testing

Early registration deadline: 14 April

<http://www.zet.or.at/kongress/Linz2006/>

Jun 4-7

PATH - Participatory Approaches in Science and Technology (Edinburgh - UK)

<http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/PATHconference/>

Jun 6-7

2nd Annual Obesity Europe Conference - Developing a Long-Term Strategy for Health and Wellness (Brussels - Belgium)

Early registration deadline: 25 April

http://www.epsilonevents.com/eps_current_event.asp?id=16&type=current

Jun 6-9

Environmental Risk Assessment of GM plants: discussion for consensus (Rotondella (MT) - Italy)

Workshop organized by IOBC - International Organization for Biological Control of Noxious Animals and Plants.

Deadline for abstracts: 15 April

<http://www.trisaia.enea.it/iobcworkshop.htm>

Jun 7-11

Place, Taste, and Sustenance: The Social Spaces of Food and Agriculture (Boston, Massachusetts - USA)

Joint 2006 Annual Meetings of the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society (AFHVS) and the Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS)

Hosted by Boston University's Programs in Gastronomy, Boston, Massachusetts

<http://www.food-culture.org/conference.html>

Jun 21-24

EurSafe 2006 - Ethics and the Politics of Food (Oslo - Norway)

<http://eursafe2006.etikkom.no/>

Jun 29 - Jul 2

10th International Conference on Agricultural Biotechnology: Facts, Analysis and Policies (Ravello - Italy)

Organised by International Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology Research (ICABR), Catholic University of Leuven, CEIS - University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Rutgers University and Economic Growth Center, Yale University.
<http://www.economia.uniroma2.it/conferenze/icabr2006/>

Jul 9-13
Annual Meeting of the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) (with ADSA) (Minneapolis - USA)
<http://adsa.asas.org/meetings/2006/>

Jul 15-19
Euroscience Open Forum 2006 (Munich - Germany)
ESOF2006 is the second pan-European General Science meeting, the purpose of which is to promote interaction and dialogue between science and the general public.
<http://www.esof2006.org/>

Aug 6-9
ABIC 2006. Unlocking the Potential of Agricultural Biotechnology (Melbourne - Australia)
Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference (ABIC)
<http://www.abic2006.org/index2.html>

Aug 6-9
A Just and Healthy Society. Eighth World Congress of Bioethics (Beijing - China)
Organised by the International Association of Bioethics (IAB)
<http://www.bioethics-international.org/>

Aug 6-10
11th International Congress of Human Genetics (Brisbane - Australia)
Hosted by Human Genetics Society of Australasia.
Early registration deadline: 5 May
<http://www.ichg2006.com/Default.asp>

Aug 8-12
Applying Ethology: Links Between Fundamental and Applied Research (Bristol - UK)
40th International Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology
Hosted by the Animal Behaviour and Welfare Group at the University of Bristol.
Early registration deadline: 6 May
<http://www.isae2006.co.uk/>

Aug 13-18
8th World Congress on Genetics Applied to Livestock Production (WCGALP) (Belo Horizonte, MG - Brazil)
Early registration deadline: 15 April
<http://iprocincia.locaweb.com.br/paginalnicial.do>

Aug 20-25
ISAG 2006. 30th International Conference on Animal Genetics (Porto Seguro, Bahia - Brazil)
Hosted by Brazilian College of Animal Reproduction
<http://www.cbra.org.br/eventos/30isag.do>

Aug 23-25
1st IFOAM International Conference on Animals in Organic Production (St. Paul, Minnesota - USA)
Organised by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
Deadline for abstracts: 18 April
http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/IFOAM_Animal_Production_Conference.html

Sep 4-6
IX Congress of the European Society for Agronomy (Warsaw - Poland)
Warsaw Agricultural University
Deadline for abstracts: 31 May
<http://www.esa.org.pl/>

Sep 13-15
Quality of Life: The Heart of the Matter (London - UK)
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) / British Veterinary Association (BVA) Ethics Committee International Symposium 2006
Early registration deadline: 1 June
<http://www.ufaw.org.uk/quality%20of%20life.htm>

Sep 17-20
Sustaining Production Systems to Improve the Livelihoods (health, well-being, wealth) of Livestock Farmers (Antalya - Turkey)
57th Annual Meeting of the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP)
Early registration deadline: 31 May
<http://www.eaap2006.gen.tr/>

Sep 17-21
Food is Life. 13th World Congress of Food Science & Technology (Nantes - France)
<http://www.inra.fr/iufost2006/index.html>

Sep 24-29
The 9th International Symposium on Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGMO) (Jeyu Island - South Korea)
Organised by the International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR). The symposium will explore the relationship between biosafety research and environmental risk assessment.
<http://www.isbr.info/>

Sep 28-30
New Pathways for European Bioethics (Leuven - Belgium)
Annual conference organized by the Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Law at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, and the European Association of Centres of Medical Ethics (EACME)
Early registration deadline: 1 June
<http://www.kuleuven.be/cbmer/congres/page.php?LAN=E&CID=13&FILE=congres>

Nov 3-4
Genes, Brain/Mind and Behavior (Heidelberg - Germany)
Organised by EMBL/EMBO - European Molecular Biology Laboratory/Organisation

<http://www.embl.org/aboutus/sciencesociety/conferences/2006/scope06.html>

Dec 15-19

ISEE 2006 (New Delhi - India)

9th Biennial Conference of International Society for

Ecological Economics (ISEE) on Ecological Sustainability and Human Well-being

Deadline for abstracts: 31 July

<http://www.isee2006.com/index.htm>

Books

New books

The Taste for Ethics : An Ethic of Food Consumption

by Christian Coff

Springer (March 2006)

Series: The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics, Vol 7.

ISBN 1-4020-4553-0

<http://www.springer.com/sqw/cda/frontpage/0,1185,4-40391-22-112581475-0,00.html>

Agricultural Standards : The Shape of the Global Food and Fiber System

edited by Jim Bingen & Lawrence Busch

Springer (January 2006)

Series: The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics, Vol 6.

ISBN 1-4020-3983-2

<http://www.springer.com/sqw/cda/frontpage/0,11855,4-40391-72-75648294-0,00.html>

Earlier published book

The Ethical Consumer

by Rob Harrison, Terry Newholm & Deirdre Shaw

SAGE Publications (April 2005)

ISBN 1-4129-0352-1 (paperback 1-4129-0353-X)

<http://www.sagepub.com/book.aspx?pid=11364>

Research Funding Calls

Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses

FP6-2006-Mobility-4

Closure date: **17 May 2006**

Last call for this action under the Sixth Framework Programme

<http://cordis.europa.eu.int/mariecurie-actions/scf/status.htm>

CORDIS Specific calls to promote the participation of partners from Targeted Third Countries in projects for which contracts are already signed or under negotiation in priority thematic areas of research

FP6-2006-TTC-TU-Priority-6-1

FP6-2006-TTC-TU-Priority-6-2

FP6-2006-TTC-TU-Priority-6-3

Closing Date: **16 May 2006**

Activity areas: Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems

Specific programme: Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area

http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=278 ,

http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=279 and

http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=280

http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=280

CORDIS Specific calls to promote the participation of partners from Targeted Third Countries in projects for which contracts are already signed or under negotiation in priority thematic areas of research

FP6-2006-TTC-TU-Priority-7

Closing Date: **16 May 2006**

Activity areas: Citizens and Governance in a knowledge-based society

Specific programme: Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area

http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=281

FP6-2006-TTC-TU-Priority-7

Closing Date: **16 May 2006**

Activity areas: Citizens and Governance in a knowledge-based society

Specific programme: Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area

http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=281

FORMAS Climate2006

Research on Sustainable Development, with Emphasis on Climate, including aspects of social sciences and the humanities.

Swedish Research Council for Environment,

Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning

Closing dates: **19 April** and **3 May**

http://www.formas.se/docs/soka_anslag/klimatutlysning2006eng.html

Call for proposals in the framework of the INRA/Formas agreement 2006

INRA (l'Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique) and Formas (Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning) have an agreement for research co-operation. One essential part of this co-operation is the mutual funding of joint research projects of high scientific quality and of societal relevance.

Closing date: **30 April**

http://www.formas.se/docs/soka_anslag/inra_formas_prog2006.html

EurSafe information

Executive Secretariat

The executive secretariat of EurSafe is provided by

Paul den Besten, who also is director of the Royal Netherlands Society of Agricultural Sciences.

Paul can be reached by e-mail at: paul.denbesten@wur.nl

or at: Eursafe secretariat, P.o.box 79, 6700 AB Wageningen, The Netherlands

Executive Committee

President: **Peter Sandoe**, Royal Agricultural and Veterinary University, Denmark; tel +45 3528 3059;

pes@kvl.dk

Vice-President: **Linda Fulponi**, Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, OECD, France,

linda.fulponi@oecd.org

Secretary: **Frans W.A. Brom**, Ethiek Instituut, Utrecht University, The Netherlands, f.w.a.brom@ethics.uu.nl

Second Secretary: **Volkert Beekman**, Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI), The Hague, The

Netherlands; tel +31 70 3358147; volkert.beekman@wur.nl

Treasurer: **Jos Metz**, Wageningen UR, The Netherlands; jos.metz@wur.nl

Members:

Ruth Chadwick, Lancaster University, UK; tel +44 1524 592832; r.chadwick@lancaster.ac.uk

Emmanuel Jolivet, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, France; jolivet@paris.inra.fr

Ben Mepham, University of Nottingham, UK; tel +44 115 9516303; ben.mepham@nottingham.ac.uk

Konrad Ott, Universität Greifswald, Germany; ott@uni-greifswald.de

Humberto Rosa, University of Lisbon, Portugal; hrosa@fc.ul.pt

Johan De Tavernier, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium; tel +32 479 897697;

johan.detavernier@agr.kuleuven.ac.be

Website

<http://www.eursafe.org/>

EurSafe membership administration

Parkweg 27, NL-2585 JH Den Haag, The Netherlands

Tel +31 (0) 70 34 56 456, Fax +31 (0) 70 34 57 146, E-mail: info@eursafe ledenadmin.nl

EurSafe News

Editor-in-chief: **Geir Tveit**, Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment; tel +45 3528 3001; get@kvl.dk

Co-editors:

Vonne Lund, National Veterinary Institute, Norway; vonne.lund@vetinst.no (Scandinavian contact)

Tassos Michalopoulos, Centre for Biosystems Genomics, Wageningen, The Netherlands,

tassos.michalopoulos@wur.nl (responsible for research funding calls section)

Kate Millar, University of Nottingham, UK; tel +44 115 9514182; kate.millar@nottingham.ac.uk

(responsible for the 'Conferences & Courses' section)

Assya Pascalev, Howard University, Washington DC, USA; apascal2003@yahoo.com (North American contact and responsible for books section)

Silke Schicktanz, Universität Göttingen, Germany; Tel. +49 551-39-3966 (direct) or -9006 (sec.);

silke.schicktanz@medizin.uni-goettingen.de (responsible for the link to human medical ethics)

Sandy Tomkins, University of Nottingham, UK; tel +44 115 951 6325; sandy.tomkins@nottingham.ac.uk

(responsible for the EurSafe website)

Deadline for the next issue: 26 May 2006