



DOES ETHICS STILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE DESIGN OF THE EURO- PEAN AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD MODEL?

PROGRAM OUTLINE

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the pillars on which the structure of the European Union has been based. In the founding principles, there was a close connection between the ethical concerns of the political decision-makers and the rights of farmers on one hand, and economic imperatives, on the other hand. It was necessary to reconstruct European agriculture and to achieve universal food self-sufficiency, in order to ensure the elimination of poverty and to contribute, as far as possible, to peace between the nations.

Nowadays, this harmony between ethics, politics and economics has been lost, for a number of reasons. Among these are: over-production as a direct consequence of the CAP, globalisation and the introduction of agriculture and food products into the agreements of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the vertical integration of agricultural activities between the supply-industries and food-distributors. Furthermore, the growing capacity to control life, particularly through genetic engineering, (GMOs, animal

cloning, etc) and the huge efforts made by some multi-national companies to monopolize commercial use of these techniques, on one hand, and the growth of ecological concerns, due to risks to the environment, on the other hand, also contribute to the tension between ethics, politics and economics in the field of agriculture.

To be more specific, important ethical questions are raised by, among others, the following issues: public support for farming and for the way its benefits are distributed; competition between land use and environmental interests; consumer demand; the partnership between public research and private industry; international trade rules and the development of southern countries. These problems cannot be addressed without identifying and analysing the conflicts in values that lie behind them. Other issues, of a more social nature, are also worth considering from the ethical point of view. One example is the social status of farmers involved *nolens volens* in the globalisation process; another is the role of public debate in the process of introducing innovations, keeping in mind that social acceptance and ethics are highly distinct concepts.

The EurSafe meeting to be held in Toulouse (France) in March 2003 will address the economic and technical developments in the field of agriculture and food production from various ethical perspectives. This may help to identify the agenda for future agricultural policies and thereby be of particular relevance for a European association.

EurSafe

European Society for
Agricultural and Food Ethics

NEXT EURSAFE CONFERENCE :

TOULOUSE – FRANCE

MARCH 20 - 22, 2003

First Announcement

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