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“World Food System —
A Contribution from Europe”

Food Ethics: A New and Necessary Academic Approach to Improve Food and Nutrition Security

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Abstract

Interdisciplinary approaches for addressing complex social, environmental and economic issues surrounding the world food systems are now at the core of international agricultural research and development. Such approaches involve interaction between different academic cultures and frequently require intensive interaction between researchers and indigenous rural communities. Such communication and participation processes can pose limitations and difficulties if the roles of agricultural scientists, practitioners and the subjects and objects under research are not clearly defined and enjoy a common understanding by the involved stakeholders.

Despite the important role agricultural researchers play in this process, academic modules on the ethics of international food and nutrition systems are still missing from the study plans of agricultural Faculties. In response to this, University of Hohenheim students, Faculty and staff are collecting inputs and analytic expertise from different sources -including non-university and partly also from non-scientific institutions- for the formulation of a teaching concept to create a new module on the “Ethics of Food and Nutrition Security”.

This new course module will not only provide knowledge on philosophical and ethical basics and concepts, but will also entice independent and critical thinking. It aims to enable an active discussion on the necessary values and the social responsibility of those involved in the future design and management of the world food systems. This is the first example where university students in close collaboration with professors and external experts develop an academic module through a participatory process that involves a series of

conferences, symposia and workshops. This initiative may have implications for European agricultural universities seeking to develop curricula and appropriate research in the field of ethics of the world food system.

Keywords: Applied ethics, social responsibility, student initiative, sustainable agriculture