



Tropentag, September 9-11, 2020, virtual conference

“Food and nutrition security and its resilience
to global crises”

The Role of Agricultural Science Knowledge Transfer to Promote Food and Nutrition Security

PATRICK ARTUR GROETZ¹, HEINRICH HAGEL², JOERN PRECHT¹

¹*Stuttgart Media University, Department of Audiovisual Media, Germany*

²*University of Hohenheim, Food Security Center, Germany*

Abstract

Agricultural science strives to improve people's basic livelihoods. In this respect, it has achieved great success to improve food security in developing countries in the last decades. However, the agricultural sector has increasingly got a reputational problem in public opinion. Since large parts of society no longer have direct contact with agriculture, they often draw their knowledge from media coverage. In addition to the media, citizens' initiatives, interest groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have an ever-increasing influence on public discussions and policy-making about agricultural issues. For that reason, recent findings and outputs have to be transferred more effectively in a direct way into public debate. This study aims at investigating whether and to what extent universities, as important part of public agricultural research, could at least partially adopt this type of knowledge transfer for a partly non-academic clientele, or perhaps already do so in order to present a more balanced picture of agricultural realities.

The methods used here are based on a comprehensive literature research. In addition structured telephone interviews were conducted with agricultural scientist of the University of Hohenheim in order to discuss and analyse the topic from the point of view of practicing science based on this case study.

Science communication must be geared to the target group, occasion, medium and format. This requires considerable effort and communication experience and competence. The results obtained paint a clear picture of agricultural science perceptions of this topic. They highlight the challenges, but also opportunities that scientists encounter and see in public relations and the media presentation of agricultural science topics. From this, relevant measures and implications for the transfer of knowledge between actors in agriculture, society and agricultural sciences can be identified, which on the one hand can result in more objective reporting. On the other hand, university science communication helps to raise public awareness that public funds are used efficiently and sensibly in the scientific system.

Keywords: Agricultural sciences, food security, knowledge transfer, media coverage, NGOs, perception of agriculture, public opinion, public relations, science communication