



Editorial

Beyond Rio + 20: Green economy in agriculture and food system



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Congratulations – to our team and authors for publishing the first issue of Future of Food: Journal on Food, Agriculture and Society, which is the outcome of intensive discussions and exchange of ideas about research results of sustainable food systems between young scientists during and after the August 2011 summer school initiated by the Federation of German Scientists On the Future of Food in cooperation with the Master course International Food Business and Consumer Studies organized at Kassel University, Germany.

International students and PhD candidates from various Universities met at Kassel University to discuss future challenges in the food system with well known scientists from Germany and the United States of America: "How can we make a change for a peaceful, sustainable and food secure world?" was the underlying question. With an Open Space event at Göttingen University this intensive brain storming week finished. Kick-off lectures about increasing world population and its needs, water scarcity, climate change, global food systems and nutrition transition enhanced the discussions in the afternoons where questions such as food safety problems worldwide, social effects of agricultural development projects as well as water privatization, community sup-

ported agriculture or how we can turn aid into partnership were discussed.

Because the funded project about the future of food finished at the end of 2011, the idea was born to start an online- journal "The Future of Food" and two participants of the summer course (Managing Editors Sisira Saddhamangala Withanachchi and Sören Köpke) took over the organization under the umbrella of the Department of Organic Food Quality and Food Culture at Kassel University (Stefanie Becker joined the team in 2013).

The problem of scale of production in general but especially in the food system is a key issue already since World War II and was addressed clearly in the book written by E.F. Schumacher "Small is Beautiful" in 1973, ranked among the 100 most influential books by the "Times", thus enhancing concerns of environmental movements in Europe trigger by the 1972 Club of Rome report "Limits to Growth". He argued that the modern economy is unsustainable and he was worried about pollution caused by the unsustainable use of non-renewable resources. He was already not convinced that efficiency is the solution, but sufficiency ("enoughness") that means a balance between the human needs, limitations



of non-renewable resources and an appropriate use of technology. He was one of the first economists questioning that gross national product (GNP) is the right parameter to measure human well-being. His idea was "... to obtain the maximum amount of well-being with the minimum amount of consumption" and he already included the Developing Countries in his economic model ("smallness within bigness") because he favored a specific form of decentralization.

As a consequence of these findings extensive research programs were initiated in the fields of environmental and social sciences as well as economics. The results were contradictory, because in many circumstances they supported the Club of Rome's and Schumacher's results, however others pointed in the opposite direction, sometimes lead by vested interests. This led to very reluctant reactions by many politicians and left civil society in uncertainty about what to believe and what to do. The main reason for this situation was the fact that most of the research was conducted in the commonly used sectoral approach.

Therefore, if one wants to achieve a change in human behavior towards a sustainable lifestyle, a different approach in science is necessary, using a trans-disciplinary approach, involving civil society in the decisions for agenda setting and the choice of scientific tools. Very much like initiatives such as the Ecological Society of America's Earth Stewardship or the Millennium Alliance for Humanity & Biosphere which formulate clear priorities to foster societal change to enhance the process from knowledge to action (Fischer et al, *Front Ecol Environ* 2012;10(3) 153-160). "Human actions and behaviors, both by individuals and societies, are resulting in the ongoing degradation of the biosphere. The social sciences have generated useful knowledge on how to foster behavioral change. Achieving large scale behavioral change requires a powerful movement within civil society. For sustainable science to be effective, it needs to engage with civil society and support appropriate initiatives...(p.153)... It is our firm belief that the ultimate solution to the sustainability crisis hinges on a far greater emphasis on further developing our understanding of the evolution of value and belief systems, at levels ranging from individuals to societies. Gaining such an understanding will require a new suite of trans-disciplinary research that does not shy away from a spectrum of questions and approaches that natural scientists in particular have rarely engaged with in the past (p.158)"

The aim of this e-Journal is to create an online platform for young scientists to publish peer-reviewed articles and disseminate scientific knowledge in the field of sus-

tainable food systems (from farm to fork). This e-Journal encourages scientists to link the basic science approach with social/cultural sciences. The major emphasis is laid on trans-disciplinary nature of the work. Clarity, novelty and significance are criteria for the peer-review process done by eminent international experts in their respective fields whom I would like to thank very much for their voluntary work.

I am proud that the Future of Food Journal (represented by the Managing Editors) already initiated events (e.g. at Rio+20 in Brazil) or supported and conducted school programs such as "water for life" in Sri Lanka within the United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation 2013, valued as a success story (conducted by Managing Editor Sisira Saddhamangala Withanachchi).

May the e-Journal Future of Food: Journal on Food, Agriculture and Society enhance networking and open discussions between young scientists and encourage them to work in a trans-disciplinary way thus participating in the behavioral change which is needed within civil society.