

Food integrity in the food chain: How can the animal production sector contribute?



Animal Task Force 7th Seminar
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University Foundation – Brussels

Session report

Food integrity in the food chain: How can the animal production sector contribute?

Animal Task Force Seminar October 26th, 2017 – Brussels, Belgium

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Programme

09:30 Welcome and introduction

Jean-Louis Peyraud, ATF President

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Session 1 – Visions from public policies and the civil society

09:45 Role of animal primary production in products quality, how can research contribute?

Jean-Charles Cavitte, European Commission—DG AGRI

[@EU_Agri](#)

10:05 Vision from the consumers' perspective

Camille Perrin, BEUC - European Consumer Organisation

[@Perrin_Cam](#) [@beuc](#)

10:25 Vision from a scientist in human nutrition

Philippe Legrand, Agrocampus INRA

[@agrocampusouest](#)

10:45 Vision from a public health perspective on sustainable healthy diets

Nikolai Pushkarev, EPHA - European Public Health Alliance

[@EPHA_EU](#)

11:25 PANEL DISCUSSION

moderated by Martin Scholten, WUR

[@mcthscholten](#) [@WUR](#)

With all speakers and audience

Session 2: Visions from the private sector

14:00 Retail industry: Intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of animal-derived food the consumer co-operative take

Silvia Schmidt, Euro Coop

[@89SilviaSchmidt](#) [@EuroCoopTeam](#)

14:20 Meat industry

Egbert Klokkers, Tönnies

Marijke Everts, VanDrie Group

[@MarijkeEverts](#) [@VanDrieGroup](#)

15:00 Dairy industry

Hanne Bang Bligaard, Arla Foods

[@arla](#)

15:20 Farmers' approaches: available levers at farm to support differentiation strategies

Seán Finan, Farmer from Ireland, CEJA

[@finan_sean](#) [@_CEJA_](#)

15:40 Portuguese pig farmers launch their own brand

António Tavares, Farmer from Portugal

16:00 PANEL DISCUSSION

moderated by Martin Scholten, WUR

[@mcthscholten](#) [@WUR](#)

With all speakers and audience

17:30 CLOSING

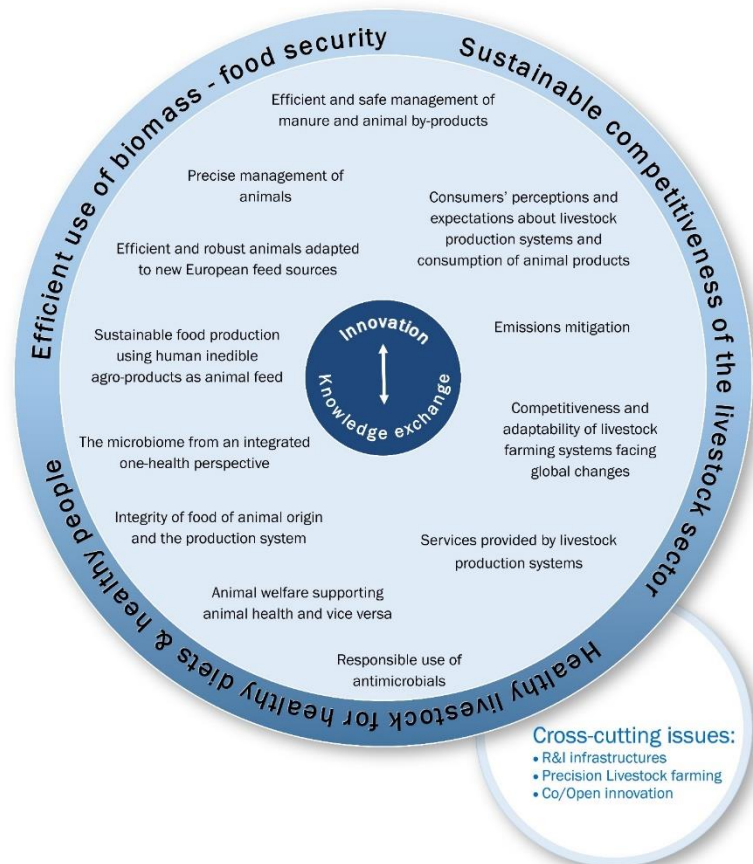
Welcome and Introduction

Jean-Louis Peyraud (President of Animal Task Force) welcomes all participants of the 7th Animal Task Force Seminar. The Animal Task Force (ATF) has been working since 2011 to promote the research and innovation needs for a sustainable and competitive animal production in Europe. Societal challenges in the animal domain are the starting point for defining knowledge development and research needs that should lead to innovations to overcome these challenges. Members and partners of the Animal Task Force are research institutions, European farmers and industry organisations of the whole animal production chain.

The Animal Task Force's Strategic Research Agenda, Dec. 2016

The Animal Task Force presented a White Paper with key areas and priority-topics for European research support to the livestock sector in April 2013 and an addendum in November 2014. In December 2016, it published a second ATF White Paper. It is an updated view on the next steps in research developed for the Horizon2020 2018-2020 Work Programme with new key areas and priority-topics, positioning the livestock sector as a key player in a European sustainable circular bioeconomy.

For more information: www.animaltaskforce.eu



This figure illustrates the main topics and sub-topics that we suggest as prime areas for further research. All topics and sub-topics are described in the 2nd White Paper of the Animal task Force.

Food integrity in the food chain: How can the animal production sector contribute?

The demand, consumption patterns, consumers' engagement and perceptions of food are **changing and diversifying**. A growing part of consumers become more interested in how their food is grown, processed and brought to market. The consumption of meat and dairy products per capita is decreasing in most European countries, with differences according to countries and species. This consumption may decrease even more as a consequence of the development of radically new technologies (e.g. cultured or vegetable "meat", vegetable "milk", insects...) as affordable alternatives and new consumption patterns (e.g. flexitarian...). Besides a main stream, we see an **increasing segmentation of the market**.

While safety issues remain a priority, the market needs products with new characteristics/qualities and products better suiting the requirements of specific populations (pregnant women, young children, seniors, people experiencing intolerances or allergies...). Beyond the nutritional and organoleptic qualities ("**intrinsic value of food**"), other criterion such as environmental footprint, animal welfare or the production of public goods (open landscape, image of naturalness...) are determining consumption choices. This is also called the "**extrinsic value of food**". Facing such new



challenges and the necessity of attain added value from the export of animal products, food processing companies are now starting to develop husbandry guidelines for the supply chain.

More than ever, a greater **focus on animal-derived food integrity¹ (safety, authenticity and quality of products, but also their extrinsic value)** is needed to **secure Europe’s role as a leading global provider for safe and healthy animal-derived products and help European food systems earn consumer trust.** New efforts will require highly inter- and trans-disciplinary cooperation, systems and multi-actor approaches and major contribution by social sciences and humanities to find new tools and innovations along the food chain to improve quality and sustainability of the food systems, understand consumption patterns and consumer preferences.

Taking stock of the preparation of the EC-FOOD2030 strategy, during the year 2017, the Animal Task Force would like to engage a dialogue between farmers, industries, stakeholders from the primary sector and from the food chain, along with decision makers, scientists and citizens to provide input for public policies and contribute to dialogue and communication in order to support the construction of animal-derived food integrity.

Session 1: Visions from public policies and the civil society

Role of animal primary production in products quality, how can research contribute?

By Jean-Charles Cavitte, Research Policy Officer, European Commission – DG AGRI

@EU_Agri

In his preliminary statements, Jean-Charles Cavitte introduces the various **definitions of food products quality**, including intrinsic and extrinsic qualities. The role of legislation, standards and contractual arrangements aim to **build traceability, transparency, verifiability and foster trust**. He recalls some relevant agriculture policies that drive products quality (geographical indications, organics...).

There are **challenges** to animal production that influence the **public perception of animal agriculture**, on their nutritional value and effects of their consumption on health, on their provision of public goods, their efficiency compared to plants to produce edible proteins, on farmers’ income and aging population, and societal concerns over intensive livestock production...

The quality of the finished product can be predicted by the quality of the raw material (Transparent Food project)

¹ FOODINTEGRITY EU project, website: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/foodintegrity/>.

“Providing assurance to consumers and other stakeholders about the **safety, authenticity and quality** of European food (**integrity**) is of prime importance in adding value to the European Agri-food economy”.

In the last and current work programmes, **several projects** have dealt or deal with intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of food and integrity. This is also one of the focus of the Strategic Approach to agricultural research and innovation for and beyond H2020 (DG Agri, 2016) and of the FOOD2030 Initiative (DG RTD), that should ground the next Framework Programme 9.

Extrinsic value refers to many aspects related to societal interests and sustainability, corresponding to concerns prominent in the animal primary production. This vision allows to move from a defensive approach to a more positive approach of animal food. Europe is well placed to defend those values. Citizens are keen on these values, but will consumers be willing to pay? Possible drawbacks/trade-offs may be considered: e.g. quality vs quantity, safety vs naturality, competitiveness vs price, etc. Finally, there is a need for a **system approach** including food and value chains, for an **interdisciplinary and a multi actor approach**.

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Vision from the consumers' perspective

By Camille Perrin, Senior Food Policy Officer, BEUC – the European Consumer Organisation

www.beuc.eu/

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[@Perrin_Cam](#)

Camille Perrin works at BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation that promotes consumer interest in EU decision making. She presents an overview of the **concept of integrity for consumers** for food of animal origin.

A provocative article published in the Dutch magazine *Elsevier Weekblad* a few days before the seminar, with a headline “*Will we still be eating meat in 10 years?*” reflects an **on-going trend of stagnation** of meat consumption, especially red meat, in most European countries. This trend is supported by some **national dietary recommendations** advising to reduce consumption (e.g. in France, Belgium and the Netherlands). It is also influenced by **media reports** on campaigns by welfare organisation exposing the ill-treatment of animals in some abattoirs. The **trust factor** has been hampered by food scares that regularly came up in the media, starting from the mad cow crisis in 1986. This has an impact on consumption, together with **changes in habits**, like a demand for less processed food. It has led to a debate on **transparency in the food market**. Knowing where food comes from is a strong demand from consumers, reflected in a request for adapted labelling on food products. A study published in 2015 shows a growing demand for better welfare of animals in Germany, associated with a consent to pay. We also see a growing trend towards the cutting on antimicrobial use in the livestock sector.

The concept of integrity implies food should be what it says it is on the label. BEUC has published a report denouncing deceptive practices in relation to the labelling of meat products, called “*Close up on the meat we eat*”. Eventually, the concept of integrity should also allow to address the food system challenges. A study called “*Food system challenges, Public Dialogue on food system challenges and possible solutions*”, UK [-link](#) has evaluated **consumers' awareness of food system challenges and acceptable solutions**. Key findings are that people tend to prefer low tech and natural solutions (incl. behaviour change such as ‘eat less meat’). They are willing to accept some technologies but they are unsure about high tech like meat biotechnologies, lab produced meat, chlorine wash.

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“Close-up on the meat we eat” study: Food should be what it says it is

Vision from a scientist in human nutrition

By Philippe Legrand, Director of the Human Nutrition

Biochemistry Unit, Agrocampus INRA

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Philippe Legrand shows that **towards remaining major nutrition problems in humans** are obesity metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, deficiencies, of which animal products are **not "guilty"**. The history of nutrition demonstrated that the solution for malnutrition is always the access to animal products. On the contrary, consumer behaviour could be "guilty" through the amounts he consumes.

Animal products are sometimes demonized for their richness in lipids. Lipids, especially fatty acids, are required for life. Compared with the official French recommendations, the current mean consumption of lipids is fine. Looking at the causes for mortality from cardiovascular diseases, what is deleterious is the total energy intake, especially the excess of energy from carbohydrates (however, it is not useful to hate carbohydrates switching from a hate against lipids!). **Nutritional recommendations** are **changing over time**, but after dogmas, impressions remain in the public perception.

In nutrition, only excess and deficiencies are a problem. In France, the mean population currently shows a deficiency in Omega 3. Among them, DHA is a major component of central nervous system. 75% of our intake of Omega 3 is coming from animal products, especially fish. Terrestrial animals could be a good vector to provide omega 3 fatty acids to human via milk, meat and eggs, from plants (linseed, alfalfa...) given to ruminants and poultry as feed.

We are omnivores, we have to say it more and more. Avoid eviction is a precaution principle: we do not know yet what molecules are helpful to regulate aging. When we evict products, we evict molecules that may be necessary. The balance of the diet comes from menu and **we should avoid both overconsumption and eviction**. Therefore we should promote informed choices and education.

Vision from a public health perspective on sustainable healthy diets

Nikolai Pushkarev, Policy Coordinator for Food, Drink and Agriculture, EPHA - European Public Health Alliance

<https://epha.org> @EPHA_EU

Nikolai Pushkarev works at EPHA, an organisation made-up of European public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals and disease groups. **What are sustainable healthy diets?** FAO gives a huge definition that covers **both human and environmental health**. We could be very well nourished, but what about if the biosphere has a problem? The food system is a major driver of pressures on the planet boundaries. The Global Nutrition Report (2015) shows we face a dual burden of undernutrition and obesity globally, sometimes even in the same country.

Looking at the **recommended diets for human health, versus for planetary health**, we see that animal products, which have the lowest share in recommendation in diet, have also the higher impact. There seem to be a **synergy** between human health and environment health, leading to the statement to increase plant-based food and decrease animal products consumption. A **reduction of half** of the current consumption of meat, dairy products and eggs in the EU would allow to achieve a 40%

“There can be no sustainable food system without sustainable consumption: fuel efficiency of cars has increased, but if the use of cars increases, we have a problem”

*1. Eviction or overconsumption
2. Oppose plants to animal food”*

reduction in nitrogen emissions, 25-40% reduction in GHG emissions and 23% per capita less use of crop land for food production. There is a considerable room for manoeuvre, as the European mean intake is far above recommendations for consumption of saturated fats.

In terms of **sustainability, we cannot speak of production separately with consumption**: fuel efficiency of car has increased, but if the use of car increases, we have a problem. A price reduction could lead to a higher demand and this could hamper the global increase in efficiency. The **sustainable diets concept** should guide our understanding of what is efficient use. It is helpful to articulate opportunities for co-benefits in a food systems transition. **Consumption patterns** are not a given, we should consider them as a policy challenge.

In terms of **research** implications, EPHA advocates for mainstreaming the LCA model into analysis of food policy, applying full cost accounting, elaborating scenarios to discover possible society wide repercussions of adopting different types of diets, more research into the concept of “nutritional yield”, more priority to policy implementation research.

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Panel discussion

The panel consisted out of four panellists:

- Jean-Charles Cavitte (JCC), EC-DG AGRI
- Camille Perrin (CP), BEUC
- Philippe Legrand (PL), Agrocampus INRA
- Nikolai Pushkarev (NP), EPHA

Martin Scholten (MS) moderated the discussion and opened the panel session with a slide and a series of questions.

Jean-Louis Peyraud (JLP) commented.

MS: In EC-funded research and innovation programmes, the concept of integrity is highly focused on food safety. We see that the consumer has a broader perception of food integrity including the sustainability of animal products.

Questions: *The producers' perception might differ from consumers' perceptions, what are we going for? Are we going to create new alliances of consumers and producers? Can producers fulfil the whole bunch of various individual demands? What if a consumer's demand leads to a less efficient and thus less sustainable production?*

NP: It is difficult to relate on the gap between consumers and producers. How do consumers make choices? Food consumption is linked to marketing, food price, a combination of physical and non-physical attributes that shape attitudes. But we see growing awareness.

JCC: We should consider the food chain and the value chains. Consumers adapt to producers and processing and vice versa. Once the retail sector decides to do something, it will go down to the farmers. The farmers have a lot of levers on the quality of food. Multi-actor research and innovation projects currently involve end-users. Legislation, for instance on climate change, may prevent producers from making non sustainable choices. We have to use a systems approach to look at sustainability issues and include sustainable consumption. Will there remain a role for multinational retailers and food processors? Yes, Europe is known for high quality products that can be exported (e.g. cognac is the first product exported from France –in value).

CP: There is not a 'whole bunch' of demands to serve. Many producers are already adapting to these new consumer demands. There is growing demand for short supply chains, local producers and a general demand for providing consumers with information (origin, systems of production, farmers' practices). Another issue is what we mean by 'efficiency'. For instance, cutting on antibiotic use in livestock might make meat production less profitable but is that less sustainable? What about the health and economic burden of antimicrobial resistance? The problem is that third countries do not have the same standards, it would be important that meat imported into the EU complies with all EU requirements (including on antibiotic use or animal welfare).

PL: Probably we eat too much. When the debates are open, we hear some extreme positions on evictions that are dangerous, and we have to protect children and old ages. Being omnivores is not negotiable. The core question resides in "how much should we eat of everything?"

Questions: *How can science and research provide a sound basis for animal based food integrity? How can research develop and showcase good practices?*

Public: The current LCA analysis as it is not relevant. It is adding functional units that should not be added and it has no link with nutritional content. Can we produce a nutrient index of food? I am concerned about the way our food systems are affecting our biodiversity, our soils are more and more agroponic, less and less sequestering carbon; this is a real concern for the future.

Public: Producers can fulfil all demands, but not all can fulfil all demands. This opens for a variety of production systems and products. Thus, the criteria used to evaluate the quality of the products should enrich with many options. The retail level should help the consumer to make an informed choice. And finally, to inform policies, efficiency should never be evaluated on animal level, but at sector level.

Public: Today, I miss the economic perspective to consider the situations across countries that show a much more complex picture. There are different sub sets of consumers that have to be matched. Producers are already producing a large variety of products. My organisation is grouping small size organic cow breeders and large breeders laying hens.

Public: We hear too often that efficiency leads to sustainability. We can be more efficient, but when the sector comes to a certain level, it is not sustainable. On economic aspects, many producers face profits that are so low that they are forced to further intensify and industrialise. We need a change in policy to get out of this system.

Public: We should consider the incidence of the media on public perception.

JLP: How to calculate the sustainability of food is a very complex issue involving a lot of actors. I am afraid of simple solutions. One of the key actors is the consumer who buys the products, sometimes from outside Europe. We should use consequential analysis to weigh all the consequences of the solutions we propose: if we want to shift from animal to plant protein, this is probably possible. But this may lead to use more pesticides to increase crops productivity.

Public: In the UK, there is a carcass public classification system that drives. Why not specifying minimum of DHA or APA in livestock production? Why not use the CAP payments as incentives to reduce lameness, mastitis, use of antimicrobials, etc. Where is the policy drive?

MS: We are facing a big change in food systems, with consumers heavily involved, we have to play another game changer. We should not do anything too simplistic nor linear with only efficiency as a unique criteria, using a diversity of criteria for evaluation to accommodate the diversity of demands. This needs dialogue and cooperation, which is not easy, with the big diversity of demands and opinions.

JCC: LCA is used in the context of environmental assessment and climate. To assess the sustainability, we need to consider environmental, social and economic issues, including farmers' revenue, consumers' demands, etc. High quality products provide more economic room for manoeuvre than cheap productions with low margins. So, there is no single solution, we have to manage complexity and diversity. On the intrinsic quality of food and nutrient compounds, legislation might help, provided that it can manage the diversity of situations and products.

Questions: Can we build a narrative of animal-based food integrity, balancing the goodies and baddies? What are the key intrinsic or extrinsic values of meat, dairy and eggs? Should we consider nutritious food products or healthy diets? Healthy consumption or fair production? Citizens or consumers?

JLP: There is a big trend towards local products. But short chain products do not necessarily mean quality products. We should be careful about the narrative regarding quality. It should be very broad. Extrinsic qualities of food may encompass: animal welfare, territories, landscape, ethics, environmental issues, etc. In France, "a good revenue for farmers" is a narrative. It has been a starting point for a new product line called "C'est qui le patron?" Nutritional quality of food products is key, but we should consider healthy diets. We need to provide information to citizens so that they can make informed choices. Sometimes, we see people oppose intensive and extensive systems, while the intensity of production is not always a relevant criteria.

Public: We should consider animal-based food integrity, as healthy diets are important for the next generation.

Public: We are moving from the "One Health" concept to the "One welfare" concept, meaning a production systems that is good, both for animals and humans.

Public: The narratives should not be excluding each other. NGOs might come up with different conclusions. We should consider both legal requirements and private standards and strategies by retailers responding to consumers in proposing differentiated products.

Public: Should we take the perception of consumers for granted? Even the NGOs don't do that, they try to influence the consumers, see the example of the consortium led by the European Environmental Bureau that has been formed to influence policy makers on the CAP reform.

NP: Epha advocates for policies primarily on the basis of WHO recommendations like the '[Best Buys](#)', which are underpinned by the best possible evidence. Part of these policies are about informing consumers and citizens, and part of them about creating the societal conditions to make the healthy choice the easy choice. If it becomes clearer and clearer that an issue needs to be addressed, but no appropriate action follows, this may well lead to a loss of faith in institutions.

PL: Human health is an important issue. We need both nutritious food products and healthy diets. Healthy consumption and fair production should be possible. A lady without DHA is likely to have a higher risk of Alzheimer disease or other neurodegenerative diseases.

JCC: Intrinsic values are important to form nutritious food and healthy diets. I don't think there is a contradiction between healthy diet and fair production. Citizens, consumers, we should look beyond discourses, at attitudes and acts, that might be contradictory.

Session 2: Visions from the private sector

Retail industry: Intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of animal-derived food: the consumer co-operative take

By Silvia Schmidt, Food Policy Officer, Euro Coop

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@EuroCoopTeam

*“Consumers
can really make
the difference”*

Silvia Schmidt is policy officer at Euro Coop, an organisation that is promoting the interests of consumer co-operatives. Their members are mainly from the retail sector. Regarding animal-derived products, Euro Coop sees, as a **big trend, a decrease in meat consumption, trends towards local, organic, animal welfare and quality products**. On the retail side, **co-operatives** are investing in their **own brands**. Among consumers, there is a raising awareness on quality assured products. Generally consumer co-operatives strive for a policy of **no hormones, no GMOs, no cloned animals**, and a high emphasis **on animal health and welfare** which inter alia translates into a **strict use of antibiotics**.

Consumer co-operatives collaborate with associations such as CIWF and the Red Tractor in order to further fine-tune standards for labelling of animal welfare. The products packaging has to be sustainable too, and include **consumer information on origin, no GMOs, no antibiotics, outdoor farming, recycling**.

Co-ops have a **focus on origin and local foods**. E.g. in UK, 90% of Co-op consumers feel supermarkets should sell more food from British farms, 50% want to know the origin of a product. Euro Coop members have **close relationships with farmers** and farmers groups to agree **on quality standards on health, welfare, sustainability, environmental issues, ethics...** Looking ahead, animal health and welfare are a priority. We need research on environmental and climate change issues to develop and implement sustainable practices for animal husbandry. We need cooperation and sharing of best practices between stakeholders and improve consumer information.

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Meat industry – Tönnies’ vision (pork processing industry, Germany)

By Egbert Klokkers, Director of beef sector, Tönnies

www.toennies.de

Egbert Klokkers is working for Tönnies, a company based in Germany, specialised in the production and processing of meat, especially pig. Facing a variety of agricultural structures in the world and a **diversification and moving consumers trends**, *“beef is sexy, chicken is sexy, the veggie-vegan trend is down in Germany, flexitarian in Germany is the key trend”*.

The **challenges for the meat industry are growing, food safety and traceability** become the most important topics. To keep trust in products, the company has a **value chain approach of quality**. It ranges from research activities to traceability, including checks on animal protection and food safety at farm level, care of animal welfare at the slaughterhouse, checks of food safety parameters in laboratories, products safety, safety and preservation of organoleptic quality of products throughout processes.

*“Beef is sexy, chicken
is sexy!
The veggie-vegan
trend is down in
Germany, flexitarian
is the key trend”*

The industry offers good prospects for modern entrepreneurs, while uncertainties remain due to volatile markets. It is driven by a **strong demand for meat, especially from Asia**, while domestic demand in Europe remains a major weakness. **Segmented offers have to expand because markets are saturated.**

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Meat industry –VanDrie Group’s vision (veal industry, Netherlands)

By Marijke Everts, Sr. Corporate Affairs Advisor, VanDrie Group

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Marijke Everts works at VanDrie Group, a Dutch family business. The VanDrie Group is the global market leader in veal, calf feed and calfskins.

When people working at VanDrie Group are asked about the definition of food integrity, it has various components, including **responsibility, customers trust on the quality of the products, safety, animal welfare, energy use, transparency**. At company policy level, this is reflected in a particular **attention to social, ecological, economic impacts**. Integrity and ethics are really important for a meat producer. Citizens are very critical. **We have to be transparent.**

On the social issue, the main trend is that society is critical, for unpleasant odours, animal welfare, surplus manure and use of antibiotics. The company has started a **dialogue with citizens and consumers** this year. An important goal of the company is to **reduce their use of antibiotics**. The company reduced it by 57% already, which is still however below the Dutch government’s objective of 70%. On the ecological impact, **meat and animal feed production** are receiving attention. The company recognises they have a great impact on the environment and strives to source locally in raw materials and feed, to use renewable energy, and wishes to recover phosphate from manure. On the economic side, there are also challenges: unrest in the trading market and changing consumer needs have forced the company to research the possibilities of developing **hybrid meat products** mixing vegetable and meat proteins.

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“Integrity and ethics are really important for a meat producer. Citizens are very critical, we have to be transparent”

Dairy industry – Vision from Arla Foods, Denmark

By Hanne Bang Bligaard, Senior Specialist on Sustainability, Arla Foods

www.arla.com/

[@arla](#)

“When we evaluate environmental impacts of food, we should consider the nutritional quality”

Hanne Bang Bligaard is a Senior Specialist on Sustainability at Arla Foods, 4th largest dairy group and cooperative in the world based on milk intake, owned by dairy farmers, established in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg.

Dairy farming has a place in sustainable diets, we have an obligation to be there. We see the **current trends in consumption habits**: more and more persons living in cities looking for **natural and/or local healthier choices, different ways of eating and needs**, for milk powder for kids, people looking for **food safety and nutrients**. European consumers are increasingly **rejecting fresh milk** (1-3 % p.a.). Top barriers for

consumption are taste, the difficulty to digest and tolerate, milk as not environment/animal friendly or not healthy for humans... 75% of consumers still give us a license to play with **milk varieties**, having milk quality, food safety, taste, healthy, affordable as a prerequisite.

Arla has a **sustainable dairy farming strategy**. In October 2017, Arla is launching a huge database to gather information about farms, medicine and herd data, to lead to increased transparency. Participation in the database is incentivized. Specific products are developed to address customer's needs like milk following season, organic, animal protection, and mountain cheese, lactose free, organic. Values associated to dairy as part of sustainability are animal welfare, minimal environmental impacts, maximal ecosystem services, **upgrading inedible resources to human edible and high quality protein**. Research to evaluate environmental impact should be based on nutritional quality of the food.

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Farmers' approaches: available levers at farm to support differentiation strategies

By Seán Finan, Farmer from Ireland, CEJA Vice-President

www.ceja.eu

[@finan_sean](#)

[@_CEJA_](#)

Seán Finan is a young beef farmer from County Roscommon, in the West of Ireland, Vice-President of CEJA, European Council of Young Farmers. Beef farmer, father and brother, run a livestock finishing enterprise with Charolais, Limousine Blue Cross. Heavy clay soil. Maximise how animals are grassed.

Education, discussion and knowledge transfer groups are levers for differentiation strategies. CEJA is supporting continued education programmes promoting practical training to young farmers. Farmers and associations take part in innovation projects supported by rural development programmes. In Ireland, the **differentiation** is often made by improving soil fertility, reduce chemical fertilisation by grazing rotation systems, reduction of the carbon footprint (e.g. quality insurance scheme, Origin Green initiative), smart farming to reduce feed, water usage (www.smartfarming.ie).

In the Future CAP, CEJA is asking for a reserve for young farmers and continued support in the rural development programmes. CEJA has also produced a survey among dairy farmers called "*Building a sustainable sector*" in collaboration with Delaval [-link](#) including **recommendations for the next CAP based on improved sustainability standards**. These results show that most European young farmers are environmentally conscious. They believe that sustainable farming contributes to the protection of the environment and that a healthy environment provides them with benefits, namely biodiversity and ecosystems, enhanced natural resources, efficiency improvements.

"Grass is the cheapest feed. The use of fertilizers has been reduced by grazing rotation systems. 36% of young farmers measure grass"

Portuguese pig farmers launch their own brand

By António Tavares, Farmer from Portugal, Chairman of the COPA-COGECA Working Group for pork and pig meat

António Tavares is a farmer and the chairman of the COPA-COGECA Pigmear Working Party. The Portuguese producers, have decided to **create their own brand**, acknowledging the meat consumption decrease in EU, a volatile international market, and the crucial need to increase internal market. The **sector is often under attack**, with repeated scandals with meat. This does not happen on other sectors:

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“I wonder why all my pigs are controlled, not my vegetables”. We see a change of lifestyle in young generations, the consumer is lacking information, and vegan associations are very aggressive. We should classify pork as white meat.

We have to adapt to meat consumption reality. EU produces the **safest and best quality meat in the world**. We don't use raptopamine, nor growth promoters, we have high standards of animal welfare, high control of antibiotics usage, and we care about the environment. **We should differentiate**: the consumer is willing to pay higher prices for a higher quality.

In Portugal, there is a strong pressure from supermarkets, the industry imports meat at the lowest price possible without any regard to quality. This leads to a lower consumption. The Portuguese brand - “Porco.pt” - offers a total traceability, pork feed based on cereals, animal welfare conditions above standards of current legislation (more space for animals due to the high temperature, better transportation conditions, castration under anesthesia). Still, it has problems: the brand was **launched by producers alone**. We have seen a negative reaction from some industries, and the distribution is alerted but not supportive. On the positive side: there is a **great acceptance by consumers**, good communication, and strong commitment from producers leading to improved products. In the EU, the Swedish pork is the most successful, thanks to negotiations with slaughterhouses, retailers and all the chain and they have very high standards of production.

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“We need a balanced diet and to promote the Mediterranean diet as UNESCO heritage”

Panel discussion

The panel consisted out of four panellists:

- Egbert Klokkers (EK), Tönnies
- Marijke Everts (ME), VanDrie Group
- Hanne Bang Bligaard (HBB), Arla Foods
- Seán Finan (SF), CEJA
- António Tavares (AT)

Martin Scholten (MS) moderated the discussion and opened the panel session with a slide.

Jean-Louis Peyraud (JLP) commented.

Questions: *Are they good examples of taking up challenge of food integrity?
Is the agri-food business well prepared for expected transitions in the food system:
for more heterogeneity of the demands, for delivering personal food, addressing
health care or personal societal concerns?
Are farmers going to entrepreneurship in new business concepts?*

Public: We see examples from the industry doing its best to address societal challenges in a good way. We hear that we should educate the consumers. Still, from NGOs, we see the wish to go for more extensive farming, they say they don't like what they call “factory farming” and want to get away from it in the next CAP. How should we react on it?

Public: How to address consumers' demands about feed, non GMO, soy free, etc.?

Public: Do you use the ICT and digital technologies to reassure consumers?

- Public: The agri-food business seems well prepared, the industry can adapt. I'm more concerned about the farmers. All the food chain actors have to work together. During the ATF-EAAP Special Session, Sodial claimed they want to address a diversity of demands, moving from "One Milk" to "my Milk", meaning they will downscale to produce much diverse products in lower quantities.
- SF: We need to educate the consumers about the benefits of meat consumption, backed up from research, providing science-based information, and to defend our industry as meat producers. We need to embrace the technologies of the 21st century and make use of apps for traceability, better care of the animals, inform suppliers and consumers. Working together is also essential, the information should flow down and allow adjustments. Young farmers are more market-oriented, more educated, more involved in vocational education. We also need to be aware of the volatility in industry. We need support in CAP measures to remain in business. The new farmer will have to be different and consider environmental measures, be more market focused, make use of financial instruments to get more loans, etc.
- ME: Yes, we have challenges. We are making progress, we work on it as a company with our stakeholders, national authorities, etc. For the moment – if you look at digital information sharing - we still operate in a kind of 20th century. We keep track of all processes and used ingredients, but we don't share these data in an open source with other companies or consumers; it's considered privacy. Meat sector is very innovative, but also considered very conservative. I'm fresh and open, I want to work for a company that is also fresh and open. More and more meat producers are fresh and open. Times are changing.
- JCC: I'm happy to see from retail or industry and farmers that things are moving to address societal concerns. It has been a long way from the FAO "Livestock long shadow" report. I'm more optimistic than 3-5 years ago.
- Public: When a market with smaller market segments, a high variety of products, but lesser companies, is moving to more local production. Will big groups be in a better place to serve local food, as they will have more money to invest in supply chain?
- EK: Regarding new digital tools, the new data regulation is a problem: data are there, but there is a huge difficulty to get databases released and open. In the chain, we have challenges. In Germany, the social acceptance of farming systems and farmers is a big challenge. One key factory farm has 2,000 pigs, 500 cows. It can be managed as a family business. Farmers have now the same expectations as other people, they don't want to wake up at 3 am; they want to have a normal life. How to transfer this reality to consumers? When you look at supermarkets, there are a lot of varieties of meat (organic, antibiotics free, GMO free, etc.). Can we manage better the different parts of meat? Niche products must be manageable.
- JCC: From the industry perspective, does implementing quality productions beyond legal requirements give you a competitive advantage when you trade with non EU countries, especially China?
- EK: On the Chinese market, the main key of success is trust in people.
- Public: The whole value chain should communicate to the society together.
- Public: I miss the organic production in the discussion.
- HBB: Arla is addressing organic farming, in fact we are the biggest supplier of organic milk. Once you have been to a farm, you are much more positive about farming. There is currently an anti-dairy focus. We have to be transparent, honest and show what we are doing.
- ME: The value chain is important for the VanDrie Group. The milk sector is closely linked to the veal sector. We use calves from the dairy sector and use milk components for our calf feed.

Public: Question to Arla Food: how do you see your agri-food business in EU? Do you prefer to work with small or large farms?

HBB: We have all kind of farms, we have no preference. What is important is management, how the farm is performed, not the size. We want the highest quality milk to offer the farmer a decent way of living.

AT: From the EU market observatory, the trend is clear, the consumption is decreasing a lot in the EU, as are exports and price. About factory farms, we need a clear definition. Portugal and Spain have intensive production of pigs. In Spain, we see a good example of cooperation within big integrated companies including production, feed plant, slaughterhouses, etc.

Question: *What is the narrative? Differentiation for internal or exports market?*

AT: We need to explain very well to the consumer how we process, for them to make their own choices. We should classify pork as white meat.

Public: Things can improve out of a crisis. Danish imports in Sweden had almost eradicated the Swedish pork population. With the retailers revealing the Danish pork were carrying MRSA antibiotic residues and salmonella, the Swedish have develop a “*Shaped for Sweden*” production. The country has now achieved self-sufficiency, making Swedish farmers happy.

AT: Differentiation is mainly intended to internal consumers. China wants low price and does not care about animal welfare. Japan is the second importer of meat. Japanese want to have quality, we have the highest, but they buy from US and Canada. The differentiation between our meat and Brazilian, Canadian, US meats has not been explained.

SF: Origin Green enables to ensure quality along the production system. Exports markets are very important to us. We have to be careful with the animal welfare narrative. As a farmer, I make sure my animals are in order about animal welfare, but not everybody has the same understanding of animal welfare.

MS: Our biggest enemy to build a narrative is the exception of scandals and misuse of animals. As long as that happens, videos will be on social media. The only way is to be as integer as possible and convince people to get rid of every case that shows an opposite: the food system has to be cleaned, either by itself, or the social media will kill it.

Public: We should care to have a more equal distribution of livestock productions over a country.

Question: *How can science and research provide a sound basis for animal based food integrity? What science and research is needed for a fair narrative? How can research develop and showcase good practices? How can science and research facilitate the agri-food sector in the transition?*

Public: Our main problem is implementation. Science knows a lot, but how to implement it? We know how to reduce lots of emissions in manure, but it needs investment. The society has to decide on the value. We need multi-stakeholder projects. The industry is faster than politics.

Public: Companies should open their doors to scientist to test some issues. We should work together instead of just facing the problems when they are here.

Public: We still need research, we do not know everything. There is still no solution for board taint, for making our animals more disease resistant to climate change. We need to focus on challenges. Some research cannot be immediately implemented.

JLP: Science knows much, it publishes data that is not understood by citizens. A scientific paper says we need 3 kg of proteins to produce 1 kg of meat. But some proteins in feed are not edible to human. We need to communicate adjusted figures to the society. To do that, we need new knowledge. We need to engage a dialogue with the society and involve the society in the

research from the beginning. The final aim of research is to better inform consumers, farmers, industry. They should be at the centre.

Public: The location of production has to be carefully looked at, in order to improve the circular economy, e.g. in Brittany, France. On animal welfare, we need research on the separation of cow and calf.

MS: Knowledge should be implemented much better. It has to focus on the really big challenges. Then, the private sector can go fast when challenges are identified. The best science is produced in collaboration with the sector. The engagement of the society is a challenge for the private sector. We have to go out of our comfort zone, into a dialogue with the society.

Question to the panel: What are your final wise words from your point of view on how science can help you?

ME: The triple helix is key for the success of our company, and we should better use the manure of our animals.

EK: Research and science are needed for the success of the whole food chain.

HBB: My colleagues and I are part of several research projects. We want to rely on science, to be honest, transparent and continue our development.

Closing remarks

By Jean-Louis Peyraud, ATF President

If we want to develop more sustainable food chains providing healthy diets in a way that is respectful for the environment, we need to consider the livestock's roles in a circular bioeconomy, as part of the agricultural and food sectors. Livestock productions can deliver positive services and goods, like a lot of by-products and manure as a fertiliser. We should better use ecological processes to improve our food systems, reduce our inputs and maximise our efficiency. This needs an increased cooperation between stakeholders over the whole food chain.

Save the date of the next ATF events:

- ATF-EAAP special session, Dubrovnik – Croatia: **27th August, 2018**
- ATF annual seminar, Brussels – Belgium: **07th November, 2018**