

Bioethics and nutrition

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The World Bioethics Congress held in Gijón in 2002 recognised of the importance of bioethics in every aspect of sustainable development, and in particular those aspects involving nutrition and agriculture, called on governments and civil society to guarantee justice, equality and the universal right to nutrition.

The conclusions of the congress included:

- Maintain the right of all to access to reliable, nutritious food, as an intrinsic aspect of the right to life.
- Guarantee the utmost access to clean water and effective healthy living conditions.
- Recognise the right of smallholders worldwide to use indigenous plants for the conservation and sustainable development of biological diversity in agriculture.

In light of the globalisation of agrarian operations which first-world companies are attempting to impose, organisations such as the KOKOPELLI foundation in France have created their own network to harvest organic seeds, producing more than 900 traditional varieties. Along with other organisations, such as the World Resources Institute, it fights for food safety and sovereignty in countries of the developing world, creating indigenous seed banks in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mexico and Guatemala.

Oxfam's Fair Trade stores make direct purchases of goods produced in developing countries by Fair Trade cooperatives.

Molecular genetic engineering development programmes have created transgenic plants with different colour, taste, size and resistance to certain insects and herbicides, as in the case of potatoes, maize, cotton, oilseed rape, pumpkins and tomatoes.

Various studies suggest that by 2015, 25% of crops grown in Europe will be of transgenic origin. In order to guarantee public health and consumer rights, the EU places controls on every step taken by foodstuffs until they reach the table, ensuring that the label specifies if the food contains genetically modified produce.

Spain has its own Biodiversity Foundation, and all of the country's autonomous regions have plans to restore and develop their indigenous varieties through the creation of a living, traditionally based Germplasm Bank. Its catalogue is a lengthy one, with just the entries for the Madrid region being given below:

- Chinchón fine white garlic
- Aranjuez "Cuatro Cascos" peppers
- Aranjuez strawberries
- "Mochuelo" melon
- "Puchero" melon
- Villaconejos "Largo Negro Escrito" melon
- Felipe melon
- Villavieja beans
- Round dwarf tomatoes

FEDERAPES was set up in 2006 by official associations of breeders of domestic animals in danger of disappearing from Spain.

The SLOW FOOD project in Bizkaia (a province of the Basque country) is encouraging individuals and restaurants to consume vegetable and animal produce raised within a radius of less than 100 km.

I would urge readers to focus their attention and taste buds on the local produce of each region, appreciating biodiversity, a taste for the authentic and seasonal produce.

