**Workshop**

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## The Concept of Best Agricultural Practice

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### INTRODUCTION

Since 2003, the concept of *Good* Agricultural Practice (GAP) is being implemented in EU policies and legislations following the so called CAP reform (Common Agricultural Practice). Basicly, the CAP reform is geared towards the framework of GAP of the FAO (FAO, www.fao.org/ag). The vision of common agricultural practice policy is starting to being realized by the political instrument of compulsatory cross compliance (Council Regulation No. 1259/1999; Council regulation No 1782/2003 and Commission Regulation EC No 796/2004), directing agricultural practices by financial incentives.
Because of the increasing political regulation of agricultural practices using the term "Good Agricultural Practice" as a defined operating instrument for policies on EU and UN level, since 2004 the term "Best Agricultural Practice" (BAP) arises (e.g. www.undp.org/gef). BAPs in that sense summarize criteria for agricultural practices which are not yet politically regulated and, therefore, are often used simply as synonym for "Good Agricultural Practice" because they reflect common practices for special cases (see www.undp.org/gef).
We propose an integrative concept of existing terms (and underlying approaches) to ease communication between all stakeholders concerned with agricultural practices. It bases on scaled production quality, takes into account the importance of increasing sustainability and defines the role of science, administration, industry, trade and producer of agricultural goods. and fits into the goals of Agenda 21.

### PRODUCTION QUALITY

It is common knowledge that agricultural practices influence the interest of several groups along the food chain including the producer with his employees, producer associations, individual retailers, retailer organizations, supply-chain driven systems, industry and – last not least the consumers. Their specific interests can be summarized in three main fields: societal demands, environmental demands and economic demands. Consequently, Meier (2002) asked for "social, environmental and economic compatibility" of production systems with "cultural compatibility as the central dimension of sustainable development".
Societal demands (including e.g. social, sociological or cultural components), environmental demands (including aspects of e.g. soil, water, air, biodiversity or landscape protection) and economic demands (including e. g. healthy food for all and not restricted to those who can pay high prices) are in direct relationship to each other like the length of the sides of a triangle. High prices influence societal demands, societal demands may lead to high prices, both may negatively or positively influence environmental demands and vice versa.
On that background, it is easy to demonstrate how those fields of demands influence sustainability: a circle within the triangle touching each side in one point differs in size when the length of the triangle sides changes. The size of the circle serves as a measure for

sustainability. In case of satisfaction of all demands an equilibrated, equilateral triangle develops with momentary optimal sustainability.
Basing on the requirements following from Agenda 21 the term "production quality" can be defined as "combination of factors resulting in a certain value of sustainability of a specific product chain". For the quantification of sustainability already several indicators are available (see e.g. www.sustainabilityindicators.org). A very easy measure for sustainability in practice is the length of the time period of unchanged use of a certain level of production quality.
Because of the determination of sustainability by the cited sets of demands, logically, the search for higher sustainability is passing lack of equilibration between the fields of demands demonstrating the fields of necessary actions.
GAPs fix a certain degree of production quality with a certain value of sustainability. GAPs evaluate and, mostly, certify a specific combination of production factors by more or less extended catalogues of criteria (overview see www.fao.org). Certification following defined standards is or recently becomes characteristic of GAPs: transparency of production, reliability of producer, trade and retailer, cross compliance of production techniques are the main goals behind the introduction of standards which should lead to traceability of agricultural production. GAPs may initiate improvements to production techniques and to supply chain infrastructure (e.g. processing, storage, transportation) but they are more and more fixed regulatory standards and policy instruments. They leave behind the not or only partially legalized concepts of Good Farming Practice (GFP), Good Plant Protection Practice (GPP), Integrated Agriculture, Integrated Production (IP), Integrated Farming Systems, Integrated Crop Management (ICM) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM). These concepts will have important function as part of "codes of conduct" in the future.

## THE BAP CONCEPT

The concept of Best Agricultural Practice (BAP) bases on the directed disequilibrium between the sides of the outlined triangle of economical, ecological and societal demands.
The driving force is the expressed wish to overcome changed external or internal demands and the introduction of a continual improvement system. *Audit* followed by search for possibilities of *improvement*, conceptualised in concrete *plans* and final implementation move the circle of amelioration of production systems up to momentary best practices with momentary equilibrium of satisfied demands.
BAPs have the character of models first and can become common agricultural practice after being evaluated as advantageous for the production system. BAPs demonstrate and exemplarily realize visions. Important character of BAP is the use of Best Available Techniques (BAT).
The actors of the optimisation process are manifold: stakeholders from economy, ecology and society formulate questions and modify demands. Research looks for answers. Authorities evaluate the whole process, often co-ordinate it and integrate new developments to standards supported by consultation. The mutual interaction between all stakeholders finally leads to increased sustainability of the production system.

## REFERENCES

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**Criteria-based and value-oriented agricultural practice in crop-growing companies and its societal benefit**

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## INTRODUCTION

The voluntary introduction of environment management systems – as well as ISO EN 14001 (1996), the Eco-Audit of the EU (Regulation EC 761/2001), the social management system SA 8000, and the development of practical criteria for the assessment of companies in view to their ecological and social competence and performance – were the results of the 'Conference for environment and development' in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the connected and guiding principles of the Rio-declaration within the framework of Agenda 21. The guiding principles of a globally sustainable development in this Agenda apply to the relationships between humans and nature, and (equally) to the relationships between individual societies. Although ecologically oriented, integrated plant cultivation in agriculture has been discussed for many years and corresponding results have already (partly) been achieved in practice. Further, international discussions (in commercial industries and in food trading) are expanding towards including voluntary assessment and evaluation of social and, lately, cultural standards. The aim is an evaluation of the extensive social performance of a company, according to ethical-ecological criteria. The 'Co-operative Pahren' (in Germany) and the 'Flor-Verde-Programme' (in Columbia) are examples.

## ETHICAL-ECOLOGICAL CRITERIA

In comparison with already existing systems, and also in regard to adaptability in agricultural enterprises, the Guideline Frankfurt-Hohenheim (FHL) of Hoffmann *et al.*, (1997) has proved particularly helpful. This is, at present, the most extensive 'criteria catalogue' for management according to ethical-ecological standards.
The voluntary integration of environment management systems, and the use of ethical-ecological criteria in the production, trade and service industries is gaining increasing significance in manufacturing. On a voluntary basis, internationally rating agencies and certification organizations assess ethical-ecological performance and supervise the adherence to principles and criteria.
The search for a peaceful solution to conflicts requires new forms of dialogue between the various interest groups, who currently oppose one another in ecological and socio-economical areas. Economic ethics and, correspondingly, agricultural ethics, are guided by the idea that the actions of all persons involved in the market economy and in the design of legal-political outline conditions should be oriented towards ethical principles. This includes the responsibility to preserve nature, and to respect human dignity and the life of future generations. Therefore, economic ethics are, according to Kersting (1994), an area where the strategic rationality – characteristic of modern economy – meets ethical reason.

The most substantial and, up to now, most precise and subtle catalogue of criteria (the FHL), which claims to contain a complete description of potentially relevant aspects required for an ethical assessment system, was developed by Hoffmann *et al.*, (1997) on behalf of German banks. Thus, on the basis of epistemological considerations (together with practical possible applications) they developed 'ethical-ecological criteria'. FHL focuses on entire society-related company results, by taking the cultural compatibility of actions into consideration, as well as considering environmental and social compatibility. Apart from ecological and social dimensions, the cultural dimension was also introduced to the discussion on ethical conduct.

In the meantime, the ethical-ecological assessment model became established in economic practice, and is increasingly used by nationally (Kohlhof et al., 2006) and internationally operating companies which employ ranking methods (www.oekom research).

The cultural dimension of FHL was added to the entrepreneurial efficiency evaluation because (for the design and establishment of ecologically compatible and socially benign products, production processes and innovations, and for the development of techniques) knowledge about the social order of civilizations is of major importance. Moreover, the FHL assumes that the capability of a society to solve its occurring social and ecological problems depends on the knowledge about the order of civilizations, which is based on traditions and conscience. Economic actions have to rely on the continued existence of this knowledge of order. However, they threaten it simultaneously every time economic and commercial forms of thought are set in an absolute way. As a result, they affect non-commercial areas of life (Hoffmann *et al.*, 1997).

Under the condition that economic actions have to rely on the continued existence of knowledge about order, threatening it at the same time, there is the possibility to supervise and assess companies as to their ethical-ecological performance, by requiring a guaranteed commitment to moral standards (Wieland, 1993).

Ecologically and socially compatible actions are always related to economic compatibility of commercial entrepreneurial activities. Our examples (Co-operative Pahren and Flor Verde Programme) fit ideally into this scheme. The activities also form part of the knowledge about the order of civilizations. In this respect, cultural compatibility of ethical-ecological actions can be seen as the central dimension in the field of tension (called 'sustainable development') and are the basis for descriptions of Best Management Practice guidelines.

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