



Editorial on Healthy Foodstuffs and Sustainable Agricultures

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Editorial

Agricultural production of foodstuffs has been a major focus of society for a long time, but the nature of the focus has been changing substantially over the last 20 years or so. First, the emphasis was placed on productivism and productivist agriculture, focusing on the integration of new technologies into agricultural production. These new technologies included all the motorized technologies that became rapidly integrated into agricultural production (e.g. tractors, combine harvesters, machines for disseminating fertilizers and other chemical inputs designed to control weed development). For a relatively long time the unforeseen consequences of some of these inputs were not appreciated. However, after several decades of these types of development, people, including some farmers, began to ask questions about the consequences of some of these technologies. For instance, it became evident that the chemical fertilizers had begun to affect negatively the quality of water resources (of rivers and lakes) which in turn had some negative effects on the quality of agricultural produce, notably foodstuffs. Furthermore, the size of some of the agricultural machinery began to facilitate the flow of water from the agricultural fields into rivers and lakes, so contributing even further to the pollution of these water resources [1-3].

As some of these negative effects of this productivist agriculture began to be recognized, some segments of the consumer market as well as some of the farming population began to raise questions about all of these negative consequences of this productivist agriculture. Little by little some farmers began to modify their way of farming and some began to communicate more effectively with segments of the consumer markets. So initially in many cases, farmers

and consumers developed personal interrelationships But it did not take long for these to develop beyond relationships between a farmer and a consumer. And thus, this led to more collective relationships, for instance where some farmers around cities (e.g. in Green Belts such as around London, UK, and Ottawa in Ontario, Canada, and around Montréal, Québec, Canada with the development of SAM (Système Alimentaire Montréalais – the Montréal Food System), or the Centre Aliment Terre de Liège (CATL) in Belgium [[4,5] and there are many other projects that link a group of farmers to a network of consumers, such as the AMAP in France (Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne, or Associations for Maintaining Small Scale Family Farming).

One of the critical differences between the period dominated by productivist farming and the current situation is the significant emphasis on human values, with the present period being characterized by a convergence between some segments of farmers producing food and segments of the consumer market. These developments need to be monitored and communicated to the population and farmers in general to ensure their maintenance and further development and their contribution to sustainable foodstuffs and hence the nutritional values of the foodstuffs that are being produced by these food projects. Furthermore, in some jurisdictions such as in the agricultural reserves in the province of Québec, Canada, increasingly the province has encouraged a whole range of different actors to contribute to the development plans for the development of sustainable agricultures [6]. While these modern developments have been making progress in more countries and territories, it is important not to forget that in effect, because of the importance

of human values, that there is many different forms of sustainable agricultures that have been emerging in different territories [7], while this variability poses a challenge for the effective management of these different forms of sustainable agricultures, it is also a significant part of the reality that must be recognized and even encouraged.

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