

## 4. Benchmarking (WP3)

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### 4.1 Introduction

In this interim report we present the results of the first task of Workpackage 3 (WP3) of the EU-financed project 'The Development of Ethical Bio-Technology Assessment Tools for Agriculture and Food Production' (QLG6-CT-2002-02594) The purpose of WP3 is to explore ethical benchmarking in order to develop a set of tools that can help to integrate ethics in food chain management. The focus of the tools is to facilitate moral communication between economic actors in the food chain and between these food chain actors and consumers in order to gain trustworthiness.

In this task we describe stepping-stones and existing tools that will help us to evaluate, develop and apply our tools. Therefore, we elaborate in section 4.2 of this report on the contents of our task. In that section we answer the questions:

- Why is moral communication in the food chain necessary?
- What is moral communication?
- What kind of tools do we need?

This section learns us that three stages in moral communication need to be distinguished: 1) expression and exchange of values of those involved, 2) serious attempt to understand the other's positions and perspectives, and 3) communication itself.

Based upon this analysis of moral communication, we describe in section 4.3 the stepping-stones that are meant to provide ingredients for these different tools. In the remainder of the report we will not describe these stepping-stones one by one, but we will try to synthesise them in four sections:

- A section on language and metaphors (4.4);
- A section on the food system as co-operative practice and as competitive market (4.5);
- A chapter on existing tools and stakeholder theory (4.6).

During our research project we have come to realise how difficult it is to get good case descriptions. In-depth interviews and discussion with the responsible people in the cases to be studied, and the discussion at the third consortium meeting in Utrecht, taught us that we have to change our plans. Instead of two in-depth case studies it is better – based upon this inventory - to interview several possible tool users with regard to their needs. We expect that this will lead to a much better practical fit between our stepping-stones and the reality of the food chain.

## **4.2 Moral Communication in the Food Chain. Why and How?**

We start this section with a short description of the problems in the food sector that raise the need for enhancing moral communication in the food chain. After this description, we shortly elaborate on the idea of moral communication. Based upon these two introductory sections we sketch an outline of the contents of our tools for facilitating moral communication. We end this section with conclusions about the general focus of our work package.

### *The problem at hand*

During the last decades governmental policy in the field of agriculture and food in Western countries aimed at providing enough and safe food. That emphasis has reached a point where a tension appeared between striving for more efficiency in food production on the one hand and satisfying the concerns about food quality and sustainability on the other hand. At the same time - and as a result of growing agricultural efficiency and urbanisation - the physical and mental distance between food production and consumption has grown. Consumers have - generally spoken - a romantic picture of food production that is often reinforced by food marketing. When - mostly in situations of food crises - they are confronted with the reality of food production, they will feel alienated. This situation leads to problems such as distrust. The technological, economic and scientific approach to food and food safety seems out of touch with the role of food in people's life world. The problems with consumer concerns and political resistance against the introduction of biotechnology in agriculture and food production in Europe can be placed against this background.

The problematic discussions about food biotechnology therefore show a larger problem with regard to the relation between the food sector and society. A mental gap has risen that asks for more than the management of public and consumer relations. It is widely acknowledged that in order to bridge this gap it is necessary that the food sector opens up; transparency and traceability are keywords in the food sector at the moment.

Transparency, however, is in itself not enough. It is clear a) that just showing what you do in itself does not solve the problem, and b) that you cannot show everything to everybody. The same holds true for traceability. Which properties of food production should be traceable? Origin, production method, environmental consequences of the production, and/or labour circumstances? Transparency and traceability presuppose clarity about the importance of what has to be shown and what has to be traceable. Possible answers to these questions depend - of course - partly upon what is practically feasible. Answering these questions depends also upon value decisions. It is clear that in practice the discussions about feasibility and values are intertwined. The more important you think something

is, the more effort you will be prepared to invest in it and, therefore, the more feasible it becomes. The values involved in these discussions about transparency and traceability are embedded in broader systems.

It is not self-evident that different actors in the food chain have a shared system of values. It is also not self-evident that such a shared system is feasible. In order to find out whether it is desirable and possible to develop a shared system, communication about these values is necessary. Communication about these values, their importance and their consequences for practical matters in the food chain, however, is not without problems. It seems that businesses (corporations/firms) have limited experience with value communication. Instruments to facilitate this communication are needed. It is the purpose of this work package to develop tools that can facilitate this communication.

### *Moral communication*

In this project we would like to integrate ethics in food chain management by facilitating moral communication between the different stakeholders in the food chain. In order to identify the different stepping-stones to be used and to make a further inventory of tools in use, it is important to have a grip on the idea of 'moral communication'. This concept has been elaborated in the discussion about education with regard to values and morals in a pluralistic society. One of the influential authors in this field is Van der Ven. In his book on the Formation of the Moral Self he defines (1998, 31) 'moral communication as the on-going process of moral exchange and understanding in the search of truth'.

He elaborates on the three keywords of this definition: moral exchange, understanding and truth as follows:

- 'Moral exchange means mutually expressing moral beliefs, principles, values, and norms, while also seeking to clarify, explain, and justify them'. From this we learn that moral communication does not only involve expressing moral points of view but also involves seeking to justify them. We not only express, e.g., that we think that animal welfare is an important value in our livestock production but we also give reasons why we think so.
- 'Moral understanding is the adopting of another's perspective and heeding another's clarifications, explanations, and justifications. It involves adopting, at least temporarily, and taking into account the individual and social history out of which these emerge'. In moral communication we are not only in the business of expressing and justifying a certain value but we also try to understand the other and his or her point of view. For instance, if someone expresses doubts about the importance of a certain environment-friendly production system, we would need to understand the background (e.g. an economic perspective and the importance of job security) of this view.
- 'This moral exchange and understanding is part of the search for truth, the search for what is good and just so that one may act with wisdom in all of life's situations'. We not only exchange views and try to understand each other because we would like to reach practical agreements, but also because we think that - although we accept all difficulties with regard to the criteria - certain behaviour is morally right and other is definitely wrong. Nowadays, an easy example would be the use of slavery in agricul-

tural practice. When we agree that one is justified in calling certain working circumstances slavery, we not only agree that these situations are unacceptable but also think that we agree rightly so.

With this definition the problem of understanding moral communication is not solved but only introduced as a topic of discussion. Especially 'truth' as the goal of moral communication raises several questions. An analysis of these questions is - for the development of practical tools - not very helpful. For our project it is of importance to see that moral communication is not solely directed at understanding each other's position but also at mutual amelioration of the values at hand. Moral communication can entail critical scrutiny of one another's values. For this it is important to distinguish between two different levels of moral communication: a first order moral communication that is characterised by plausibility, and a second order communication that is characterised by justification. In first order communication the 'perceptions, experiences, images, metaphors, symbols, stories, convictions, principles, values, and norms that are dealt with and exchanged (...) are taken as self-evident, reasonable, understandable. They need not to be discussed or proved' (Van der Ven 1999, 32). In first order communication the values, norms and metaphors are accepted as plausible. They have two important features: their core contents are taken to be self-evident and their guidance is not contested. People act upon them and they take direction, inspiration and guidance from them. In first order communication not the values, principles, etc. as such are at stake but questions with regard to their applicability in certain practical situations.

'Second-order communication also is characterized by narration and argument, but the stories that are told and the arguments that are used, are intended to evoke discussion, to break through the boundaries, the walls, of the common life-world. Questions are not meant to elicit further clarification and enrichment or deeper understanding, but to call into question the traditional rules, values and norms' (Van der Ven 1999, 33v). Second-order moral communication is about moral conflicts. Practices, norms or ideals that were accepted once are challenged now. In the food chain, second order communication often starts when generally accepted practices within the food chain are questioned and challenged by NGOs and when significant numbers of consumers support these questions by raising 'consumer concerns'.

From this short analysis we learn three things that are important for the development of our tools:

- Moral communication entails the expression and exchange of values of those involved;
- Moral communication entails serious attempts to understand the other's position and perspective;
- It is important to distinguish between moral communication about a) plausible and therefore shared perspectives and b) divergent and therefore challenged perspectives.

### *Developing a tool*

The objective of our work package is to link food chain management and ethics in order to enable the stakeholders to deal adequately with ethical issues in the food chain. For that purpose we will develop a set of tools that can be instrumental for critical reflection. The typical tool will not be a checklist for companies to inspect their values, nor will it simply be a recipe for satisfactorily answering complaints from environmental, consumer or animal welfare groups. The tools, instead, will be of three kinds:

- Tools for value clarification (within firms). Clarifying one's own values is a first step towards moral communication and a first phase of the communication itself. For the first tool one can think of lists of interconnected questions with building blocks for possible answers. These building blocks enable organisations in the food production system to formulate positions and clarify the value decisions they routinely make.
- Tools for improving the understanding of the positions of others (other firms, consumers and NGOs). Answers of individual actors within the food chain, however, are not enough. Firstly, the interdependence within the food chain extends into the field of value judgements: decisions made in one place in the food chain limit the decisional space of others. In order to provide transparency and traceability in the food chain with regard to these value judgements moral communication within the chain is necessary. It is therefore necessary to provide tools that help to understand the position and perspective of the other actors in the chain. Secondly, providing transparency and traceability presupposes an understanding of towards whom a firm would like to be transparent. Therefore, the tool should also improve the understanding of the positions of the citizen-consumer and NGOs. Here we think of a typology of systematic positions in which different value judgements are merged into more or less systematised pictures. This overview of ideal-types helps to understand the possible positions of others.
- Tools to characterise differences of opinion and suitable communication strategies with regard to these differences. The third kind of tool is needed to help actors to distinguish between 'a) plausible and therefore shared perspectives and b) different and therefore challenged perspectives'. Here we think of a tool that consists of a characterisation of different moral conflicts and suitable coping systems. For this we think of process-oriented tools that create and structure discussion arenas.

Thus the work package will deliver instruments that enable actors in the food chain to a) formulate their own answers to the relevant questions, b) understand the answers of others, and c) start communication that is in line with the kind of emergent problem.

### *Conclusions*

The main conclusions that we draw from this analysis of moral communication and its context is that for facilitating moral communication in the food chain:

- the emphasis should not be on a possible result, like trust or trustworthiness, but on the processes of moral communication;

- it is important to distinguish different stages of moral communication (self-clarification, understanding the other, comparison and communication), because from each stage follow different requirements for the tools;
- it is important to recognise that communication is not only build upon conceptual skills but that social skills are equally important and that we need to address the importance of these social skills.

### 4.3 A Systematic Presentation of the Stepping-Stones in the Report

The stepping-stones analysed in this report are meant to provide ingredients for different tools. They consist of different elements that might be helpful for their further development of our toolbox. Some of these stepping-stones already have a direct link with the issues at hand in moral communication within the food chain. Other stepping-stones, however, have a much more distant relation to the issue of moral communication. According to us, a wide variety of possible stepping-stones is needed, since the problem at hand is relatively new. We hope to benefit from a broad inventory of possible inputs from diverse discussions and backgrounds.

For the selection of stepping-stones we have distinguished four different leading questions with regard to the food chain. The answers to these questions were used to cluster groups of items that might function as stepping-stones. In this interim report we limit ourselves to the description of these items. In the next task we will decide what possible stepping-stones do really help us in developing our tools.

*Which concepts help us to understand the relation identity-communication in the food chain?*

- Description and analysis of discussions about the use of images and metaphors and their importance for conceptualising and managing ethical issues in food chain and/or business contexts, including images and descriptions of ethically ideal chains.
- A brief analysis of theories about identity with special attention for the concept of narrative identity. Application of these theories to the identity of organisations (e.g. firms).

From these stepping-stones we expect to gain insight in the (symbolic) representation in and of the chain and the relevance of these (symbolic) representations for real life communication.

*What is the context in which the tools have to function?*

- Here we think of three kinds of stepping-stones that might be relevant:
- Description and analysis of discussions with regard to the concept of 'practice' and of practice-inherent moral norms and values, with a special emphasis on the relations between different practices in a pluralistic society.
- Description and analysis of (descriptive and normative) stakeholder theories with regard to the role of implicit and explicit negotiations with stakeholders and the justifying role that stakeholder consultation can and cannot fulfil.

- Analysis of the relation between citizens and consumers, the relation between civil society and market.

From these stepping stones we expect a) insight in the societal and economic contexts in which the food chain has to operate, b) an overview of the discussions about the way responsibilities are assigned in these contexts, and c) material to evaluate existing tools from the perspective of the consequences of these contexts for the application of the tools.

*Which moral concepts already play an important role in food-chain-debates?*

- Analysis of the concept of trust, especially of the difference between anticipatory and responsive trust and the relation of trust with traceability, transparency and responsibility
- Analysis of the concept of responsibility, especially of responsibility for the vulnerable entrusted to us and of the distinction between minimal and ideal responsibility.
- Analysis of the concept of care and its role for relations, departing from the discussions within the ethics of care.

From these stepping-stones we expect to gain insight in why, where and how ethics can be introduced in food chain management.

*Which tools are already in place in business and business ethics?*

- Description and analysis of benchmarking (A systematic process for securing continuous improvement through comparison with relevant and achievable internal norms or standards). Benchmarking is a management tool already in use in both public and private sector organisations and it is all about change, moving from one position to a better position.
- Description and analysis of standards and protocols for ethics and values in businesses. Literature on business ethics and corporate social performance in general, with special attention to a) the development and evaluation of standards and codes, and b) process-oriented approaches.

From these steppingstones we expect an inventory of possible processes of standardization of non-quantifiable elements of production, explicit reflection on strengths and weaknesses of standardization and an overview of 'ethical standards' already in use.

*Describing these stepping stones*

In the remainder of the report we will not describe these stepping-stones one by one but we will try to synthesise them in four chapters. In the next section (4.4) we will focus on the ways in which identity, image and metaphors play a role in the first two stages of moral communication (self-clarification and understanding the others). Organizations cannot always 'just' make a list of the values they hold. Their values are often held implicitly and are embedded in the way that they express their identity. Also the perceived values of other organizations can sometimes be traced through the indirect way of analysing metaphors used to describe these organizations.

For facilitating moral communication in the food sector it is important to distinguish between 1) the food sector as a co-operative practice in which different parties work together, and 2) the food sector as a competitive market in which companies operate as rivals. In section 4.5 we explore these differences and we learn that both create different opportunities and challenges for moral communication in the food chain. In the first context moral communication can build on existing co-operation, in the second it needs to acknowledge the possibility of 'ethics' being used as a strategic device. Trademarks, ethical labels and the like can be seen as instruments of companies for responding to consumer concerns in the market and function- at least partly - as tools to gain larger or specific lucrative markets.

The focus of our tools is to facilitate moral communication between economic actors in the food chain and between the food chain and the consumers in order to gain trustworthiness. For our work package it is therefore important to have a more precise understanding of the different ideas and concepts that are related to trust and trustworthiness. In section 4.6 we analyse trust, trustworthiness, responsibility and care. This analysis will give us insights that are important for the evaluation of the tools that are already available.

In the last section (4.7) we give a systematic presentation of eleven tools that are in use. We think that these eleven tools, together with some of the tools described in WP1 (like the ethical matrix), will help us in completing our set of tools. Each of these tools is described in more detail in the annex. The tools that we found can be grouped under five headings. We found tools for: 1) ethical exploration, 2) ethical decision-making, 3) ethical identity expression, 4) management of change, and 5) stakeholder dialogue. Stakeholder dialogue seems for our project a very important tool. Therefore, we give special attention to stakeholder theory as its background. We focus on the unsolved problems within this theory, not to discredit stakeholder dialogue but to show which problems we need to tackle in the next - evaluative - task.

#### **4.4 Values Embedded in Identity, Imago and Metaphors**

In the first two stages of moral communication (self-clarification and understanding the others) one cannot always 'just' make a list of the values one holds. The values organisations hold implicitly are often embedded in the way that they express their identity, and the perceived values of other organisations can sometimes be traced through the indirect way of analysing metaphors used to describe these organisations.

##### *Identity and Imago*

One can understand 'corporate identity' as the sum of its values. Corporate identity is intertwined but not identical with corporate image. The latter refers to how firms are perceived, while the former refers to how or who a firm was, is and would like to be. Nevertheless, reflection on identity is often stimulated by reflection on image.

Image is important for companies. It has - as a marketing issue - gained enormous importance in the 1980s in conjunction with the idea that successful corporations should not primarily produce things or products but brands. What a company produces in the first



place came to be seen as images: brand image was what counted. Consequently, image management became an issue of the highest corporate relevance. Image includes not only visual aspects of brands, such as logos, but also the values, lifestyles and emotions associated with the brand. The aspirations of brand imaging, however, have been expanded. Brands came to be sources of meaning and identity, acquired spiritual dimensions.

Focusing solely on brand image becomes problematic, when an image is not linked with reality any longer, e.g. unpleasant realities about production circumstances. The problem for firms is that this gap will inevitably backfire. Image management, therefore, cannot easily be separated from corporate identity.

A way to understand human identity is to consider it as narrative identity. Narrative identity is an attempt to grasp reality in a comprehensive way. Living amidst potential chaos, people create unity, meaning, purpose and direction through narrative devices in an essentially historical, story-like way. Johnson (in his book *Moral Imagination*) takes narratives in a broad and metaphorical sense. Narrative is not only linguistic storytelling. Life itself is lived in a narrative way, i.e. people live their lives in a story-like way, with the help of narrative explanations that construct unity as well as direction. Narrative identity relates persons to their past and future as well as to their social and material environment. It is therefore not only a historical but also an ecological concept. Understanding these narratives, in turn, leads us to frames, plots, metaphors and other imaginative devices. We are thus directed to the importance of metaphors for corporate identity in two ways:

- Thoughts about companies are (sometimes, often, always?) metaphorical. Companies can be seen as persons but one can also think about companies in terms of machines or biological organisms;
- Contemporary thinking about identity stresses its narrative character and metaphor is a crucial element in understanding narrative. When we would like to understand the values embedded in a company's identity, deconstructing its narratives – its metaphors - might help to express these values.

### *Metaphors*

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999) the embodied character of the mind explains why conceptual thought is largely metaphorical. As children, we learn to think in specific situations, in which we equate affection with warmth, importance with bigness, etc. Growing up, these associations turn into what the authors call 'primary metaphors', which are gradually combined to form the complex metaphorical structures in which mature conceptual thought takes place. The mechanism is always a movement to understand the unfamiliar with the help of the familiar.

Schön (1979) argues that while designing social policy is often seen as a problem solving activity, the setting of the problem is in fact more important. Problem setting can be clarified by listening to stories that people tell about situations. Because stories are specific, they preserve more of the richness of situations than theory (they are comprehensive devices to deal with reality). The framing of stories is often based on underlying metaphors, which Schön calls generative metaphors because they generate explanations, observations and problem solutions. He emphasises that many conflicts cannot be solved through the collection of new data, because they are caused by different metaphorical framings that give relevance to different kinds of data. This shows the importance of un-

derstanding the metaphorical structure of discourse in order to be able to understand the positions of those with whom one would like to communicate.

In business management the ideas about the role of images, metaphors have been elaborated by Morgan (Images of Organization, 1986 & Imaginization, 1997). He expresses the idea that all theory, including theory about organisation and management, is based on metaphors. In Images of Organization he presented six different metaphors of organisations, including machines and organisms. Each of these metaphors highlights as well as hides its own specific aspects of organisations. Managers should avoid superficial management fads by using the different metaphors wisely and creatively. In Imaginization he uses metaphors as creative devices in order to start reflection about organisational identity. According to him managers should become skilled in the art of using metaphors to find 'new ways of seeing, understanding, and shaping their actions.'

Awareness of metaphors clearly can be put to different uses. Metaphors generate frames of thought, and elucidating them therefore elucidates our thoughts about an issue. Metaphors guide the search for solutions to problems. But awareness of the metaphors organising our thought also implies awareness of possible alternatives. When we look for fresh alternatives through the pursuit of new metaphors, they become devices to facilitate creative processes. In short, on the basis of an awareness of metaphors different tools can be constructed, which are not mutually exclusive: tools to clarify frames of thought, to look for alternatives, to guide the exploration of an issue. For the present work package, their usefulness for thinking about corporate identity in relation to corporate ethics is the criterion.

### *Conclusion*

With regard to the different tools that we would like to develop we can conclude from this analysis of identity, imago and metaphors that for self-clarification and understanding the others:

- The role of real and perceived identities is important. The work package needs tools to construct and deconstruct identity and imago;
- The role of language and the way positions are framed are important. The work package needs tools to disclose the role of metaphors and frames in shaping identities.

## **4.5 The Food Chain as Co-operative Practice and Competitive Market**

For facilitating moral communication in the food sector its structure and the way different actors relate to each other are important. In this perspective the food sector has two different faces that require different tools for moral communication. On the one hand, different parties work together in the food sector. They have common standards and common goals (like food safety). For facilitating moral communication one should take these common practices as point of departure. An analysis of the food sector as a 'practice' could therefore provide us with stepping-stones for our work package. On the other hand, the food sector is a market in which companies operate as rivals. Ethics is in this market used as a strategic device. Trademarks, ethical labels and the like are instruments of companies for respond-

ing to consumer concerns in the market and function - at least partly - as tools to gain larger or specific lucrative markets. For facilitating ethical communication in the food sector it is therefore also important to have a good insight in market positions in the food market and of the role of consumer concerns on this market. For facilitating moral communication we need to have more insight in the role that ethics plays on the market. An analysis of food as not just a commodity and of consumer concerns will therefore also provide us with stepping-stones for our work package.

### *Practices in a Pluralist Context*

In order to improve our understanding of the co-operative activities in the food chain it might be helpful to use the concept of practice. The central idea is that human activities take place in a social context. There is a difference between cutting someone with a knife in a medical context and in a fight. The 'same' action is different, because of the differences in context. One way of understanding this difference is by focusing at the organisational principles that form the basis of the contexts in which these activities take place. The underlying principles of fighting are different from the underlying principles of medicine. In order to get a better grip on these organisational principles the concept of practice has been used.

Being embedded in different practices makes the 'same' action different. In order to get a better grip on this concept of 'practice' we start with a definition of practice by Alisdair MacIntyre. His definition seems helpful for elaborating on the different problems in trying to understand the food sector as a practice.<sup>1</sup> In *After Virtue* (1984, 187) MacIntyre defines a practice as follows: 'By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. Tic-tac-toe is not an example of a practice in this sense, nor is throwing a football with skill; but the game of football is and so is chess.' In the definition of MacIntyre we find three important elements:

- He describes a practice as a coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity. The problem created with this part of the definition is to distinguish one practice from another. The question is which activities we take together as a coherent and complex form, which level of abstraction we want and where we draw the line between activities that belong to one form and to another.
- Their internal goods characterise practices. For science as a practice he proposes truth as an internal good and for medicine human health. One could defend that food safety and food security are the internal goods of the food practice. In the interviews with the different stakeholders in the next task we have to find out whether this is really the case. These internal goods are distinguished from external goods. External goods are necessary means in order to keep the practice going (like money, jobs and buildings) and in that sense very important. However, they are not relevant for un-

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<sup>1</sup> Different ways of defining a practice prevail. For our workpackage it does not seem to be necessary to dwell into these different definitions. We use the definition of MacIntyre in order to elaborate on some of the tensions intrinsic to the use of the concept of practice.

derstanding what the practice is all about. They are of course important because they shape the context of the practice. An important characteristic of the internal goods of a practice is that they are necessarily contested. Some discussion about the character and relation between the different internal goods of a practice always exists (What is truth, health or food safety? What is the relation between consumers' risk perceptions and scientific risks? Do countries need an own agriculture to establish food security or is food security a global good?).

- From the internal goods of a practice follow standards of excellence in order to assess the adequacy of different practice activities. Since practices are oriented at internal goods, they are necessarily normative in the sense that different activities are better or worse directed at these internal goods. In order to assess the different activities standards of excellence are available. In a well-functioning practice performance according to these standards of excellence is a dominant denominator for the distribution of the external goods. A practice functions well when the performance according to the standards of excellence plays a dominant role in the distribution of, e.g., money and jobs.

A question to be addressed in the following tasks of our work package is in what way the concept of practice is helpful in understanding the food sector. On the one hand, one can see food safety and food security as internal goods of the food sector. On the other hand, it is clear that the links in the food chain are – not yet – integrated in a way that enables them to be understood as a coherent and complex form of socially established, co-operative human activity. Coherence and co-operation between the different links seems primarily organised through external goods (money) and not through common standards of excellence. A lot of money is involved in the food sector, it operates on a huge market. According to the Worldbank (Diaz-Bonilla & Thomas 2003: 233) the top 20 of food exporters together export for 80.26 billion US\$ a year.

#### *Food: Not Just a Commodity*

Because food is an important economic commodity our tools need to acknowledge this market reality. However, one of the specific aspects of the food market is that we cannot regard food purchasing as just an economic activity. Among the stepping-stones for our tools we need elements that address the issue that food is not just a commodity.

Food is special because it is important for maintaining our lives, without food we die. This is of relevance because up until recently in affluent countries and still in great parts of the world food is scarce. Food chain ethics cannot neglect the fact that massive under nourishment prevails across the globe. FAO estimates at this moment that some 800 million people are undernourished.

Food is also special because it is strongly linked with our cultural and individual value systems. What we think of acceptable food products - the distinction between the edible and the inedible - is strongly related to our religious and cultural worldviews. The distinction is not just based on what our bodies can digest - think of eating insects, cats, dogs or horses - nor do we treat food as just getting sufficient nutrients. The social and cultural meanings of food preparation, of sharing food and of the way that food is part of our

communication patrons, is a study in itself. The consumption of food plays a role in our collective and personal identity building.

The fact that food is special has direct consequences for the way that ethics relates to food markets. Consumers formulate certain 'moral concerns' with regard to food production and one of the ways that food companies respond to these concerns is by labelling certain products as animal friendly, organic, natural, etc.

In our work package we need to elaborate on the relation between consumer concerns and ethical labelling. Therefore, we analyse in this task the concept of consumer concerns. The complexity of this concept will become clear, if we take a closer look at the different concerns that consumers voice on the food market:

- *Concerns that matter to all consumers.* Certain consumer concerns matter equally to everybody in their role as consumers. Food safety is a key issue in this field. Food safety is important to all consumers and it is clear that food safety issues ask for a governmental response. It is beyond the possibilities of individual consumers to assess these questions (Rippe, 1999). Here we see that a certain consumer concern calls for activities of citizens in order to handle their concerns.
- *Concerns that matter to specific groups of consumers.* Other consumer concerns matter to special groups of consumers, because of the way they want to live their lives. It is important for citizens to be able to live according to their own life plan. Respect for their autonomy implies that they have the prima facie right to live their life according to their own value system. Their right to live according to their own life plan implies that they ought to have the choice for products that fit in with their view of life. Vegetarians, for instance, can only live according to their own value system when they know whether or not their food contains animal products. In so far as vegetarianism is a lifestyle we see that personal values enter the market. If vegetarianism transcends lifestyle and is a moral choice that appeals to others, it will go beyond consumer concerns.
- *Concerns that go beyond consumer concerns.* Finally, concerns are articulated on the market that find their origin in the role people have as citizens. These concerns are related to ideas about a good society. These concerns are not 'consumer concerns' in a technical sense; they are public concerns. People are concerned about certain products because of the wider impact of these products on their society and the world. Take, as an example, meat that is produced by crated calves. People are against this way of producing meat, not just because they do not want to eat meat produced by crated calves but also because they think that the way crated calves are treated is immoral and should be banned. Crating calves is problematic because it is not compatible with a good society. Here we see how civic values enter the market.

In developing our tools we need to take into account the distinction between consumers and citizens and the link between both roles as shown in the analysis of consumer concerns. We also need to look at how food companies respond to these concerns, e.g. in so-called ethical labelling.

### *Conclusion*

With regard to the different tools that we would like to develop we can conclude from this analysis of the food chain as a co-operative practice and of food as a special commodity in a competitive market that for facilitating moral communication:

- The co-operation of actors in the food chain as a common practice with more or less shared standards on food safety and food security is an important point of departure for developing communicative ethical tools;
- The role of ethical standards, labels and trademarks as answers to consumer concerns and as competitive instruments calls for tools that facilitate a process of fair comparison of different standards in competitive markets.

## **4.6 Trust, Responsibility and Care**

The focus of our tools is to facilitate moral communication between economic actors in the food chain and between the food chain and consumers in order to gain trustworthiness. We concluded at the end of section 4.2 that the emphasis of our work package should not be on a possible result of moral communication, like trust or trustworthiness, but on its processes. Nevertheless, it could be helpful for designing our communicative tools to have a more specific understanding of the different ideas and concepts that are related to trust and trustworthiness. The analysis of these concepts does not directly contribute to description of our tools but it will give us some insights that might be important in the evaluation of the tools that are already available.

### *Trust<sup>1</sup>*

In trying to define the concept of trust the diversity of definitions is striking. Like Hardin (1993, 2000) we can define trust as embedded interest in the sense that you will trust someone, if you have sufficient reason to believe that it is in that person's interest to be trustworthy. Trust is embedded in one's judgement of the interests of the trusted. The basic premises of this rational choice approach are that both the trustier and the trustee are rational agents and that trust is a form of rational calculation based upon available information. Since trust becomes crucial in situations of risk or uncertainty, trust is seen in this approach as rational risk calculation. In this process of rational calculation both the trustier and the trustee aim to maximise their interests.

But is trust always a matter of rational considerations and interests? Lahno (2001) convincingly argues that genuine trust has an emotional character that goes beyond the direct control of reason. He states that a focus on rationality does not suffice for enlightening the concept of trust. Trust is more than accepting a certain risk, in the sense that we decide to trust after having weighed all risks and benefits. This does not imply that trust is a completely intangible concept that lacks any relation to reflective deliberation and reason. Yet, it means that trust is not merely influenced by the risks and benefits in the surrounding world around. Trust itself colours our perception of that world. Trusting has a double direc-

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Franck Meijboom for his valuable comments and for the use of texts from other projects on trust in agro-ethics.

tion: although rational analysis of risk and uncertainty plays an important role in the process of trusting, trust is not something that is decided with a calculator on our desk. Understanding trust as an emotional attitude elucidates that trust colours the information we get about risks and uncertainties. Our perception of the information that we receive is highly influenced by the presence or absence of trust, e.g. someone who trusts the food sector will probably perceive a large-scale recall of a product by a food company as a confirmation of his trust. On the other hand, someone who lacks such trust in the sector will presumably have the idea just to have escaped from another food crisis.

In short, speaking about trust implies speaking about relations. Trust is never a kind of static noun that can be separated from trust relations. Further, in speaking about trust we cannot ignore the emotional character of trust. Knowledge and control are both issues that are important with respect to trusting relations. However, by reducing trust to a problem of knowledge and control or power we tend to eliminate trust (Becker, 1996). Trust is not only a matter of risk reducing, it enables us to deal with risks and uncertainty.

To prevent that trust becomes a catch-all concept that will be next to meaningless, it is wise to differentiate between different types of trust (see: Sztompka 1999; Hollis 1998). We may distinguish at least two general types of trust: anticipatory trust and responsive trust<sup>1</sup>.

**Anticipatory trust.** Anticipatory trust is the kind of trust in which one trusts the other since one expects him or her to act routinely. It is the normal pattern of behaviour that forms both the starting point and the ground for trust. The main element in the (implicit) decision to trust is the analogy between this case and former cases in which the other has acted in a trustworthy way. Precondition for this type of trust is that a kind of predictive pattern exists. This might also be based upon the sum of different events and different actors with a same result. When I have never bought decayed food in a supermarket, I will also buy food in a supermarket that I do not know at all. In that case I will trust that the food quality in this supermarket is like everywhere else.

**Responsive trust.** In many situations in the agro-food sector the normal pattern does not suffice as ground for trusting relations or a normal pattern is absent. With the introduction of a new technology in food production, for instance, we have to trust others that the products of that technology are safe and meet certain standards of quality. However, in such a situation we cannot rely on the usual way of dealing with these products, since no normal pattern concerning this new technology is established. In such cases we may better speak about responsive trust. With responsive trust we do not expect the other to act along the normal pattern but we expect the other to be responsible in his or her acting with respect to the object entrusted to him or her. The other should not merely do the usual but should do what is right, i.e. should do what may be expected of him or her in moral terms. This implies some extra responsibility. Shared values and shared moral understandings - and the expectation that the other will act in accordance with them - are the ground of this kind trust.

Anticipatory trust presupposes predictability, responsive trust presupposes shared values. For anticipatory trust transparency and traceability seem to be enough. Responsive

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<sup>1</sup> Sztompka (1999; 27-29) also speaks about evocative trust. This type is, however, not very illuminating in the field of agriculture and food. See also Hollis (1998, 10-11), who distinguishes predictive trust (trust the other to do the same as usual) and normative trust (trust the other to do what is right).

trust, however, remains problematic and vulnerable as long as it is not clear what the implications of the shared values are. Therefore, responsive trust is not only a matter of transparency concerning the values at stake but also implies a discussion on how these shared values are applied in relation to the object of trust. Responsive trust asks for moral communication.

For the food chain this means, among other things, that giving information does not necessarily generate trust, since the presence or absence of trust partly determines how information is conceived. Traceability might be important for the 'rational choice' aspect of trust but it does not say much without being linked to values. Transparency should also include transparency of aims and values and how these values are translated into norms. The best way to make trust in others possible is by becoming trustworthy. In order to be trustworthy it is necessary to know and communicate about one's responsibilities.

### *Moral responsibility*

Responsibility is a frequently used concept in daily language. Hundreds of books and articles have been written about responsibility and the concept appears in political, societal and even personal discussions on a daily basis. Whether it is about the responsibility of the physician or government, the responsibility for safe food or healthy nutrition, or responsibility as an educational aim, the public has a general understanding of how the concept of responsibility is used in a given context. While discussions usually address the content of responsibility in a specific situation, the concept itself is rarely defined. Despite our frequent use and understanding of the concept, it is not an easy task to define it in an abstract way.<sup>1</sup>

Let us therefore start by exploring the contrasting concepts of 'being responsible'. Someone is 'not responsible' when he is (as yet) lacking the capability for being responsible, e.g. an infant. Someone is also 'not responsible' when he is not in the situation to influence what is happening. Then, someone else might take the responsibility. 'Being responsible' can also be contrasted with 'being irresponsible'. In that case, someone is capable of responsibility and is, up to a certain degree, able to influence a situation but does not (rightly) do so and he is blamed for that (De Beaufort 1992). Responsibility and the contrasting concepts refer to moral responsibility. Moral responsibility can be assigned to people (by themselves or others) having the necessary capabilities. It means that a responsible person is morally accountable for his choices and can pro- or retrospectively give good reasons for them. Responsibility comes is related to power and vulnerability: a choice between different actions is available and this choice matters to others.

Moral responsibility is linked with one's behavioural choices. This holds in two different ways. First, from the perspective of reactive responsibility the point of departure is a certain (mostly undesirable) state of affairs. Then the question is asked what a certain actor (P) has done in order to determine whether that actor can be held morally responsible (and thus blamed) for what has happened. Second, from the perspective of prospective responsibility the point of departure is the actor (P) feeling responsible for bringing about something. That felt responsibility determines the actor's behaviour, which in turn results in a certain state of affairs. The concepts of retro- and prospective responsibility differ in

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<sup>1</sup> We will not dwell into the philosophical discussion about responsibility and free will.



point of departure (from the actor or from a situation), direction (responsibility ascribed after something happened or responsibility taken to strive for something) and perspective (responsibility ascribed from the outside or by the actor himself). While these distinctions are theoretically illuminating, in practice both concepts are intertwined. What one accepts as one's prospective responsibility might be linked to one's calculation of whether one will be blamed or not.

Responsibility is not only a question of perspective but also of standards. This is of specific importance for our tools. Standards of responsibility probably differ among actors in the food chain. On the one hand, some scholars defend that actors only need to take their minimal responsibility. With minimal responsibility acting responsibly means sticking to the minimal standards that are set by some social environment, e.g. the government. One does what minimally can be expected from the outside and is accountable in case of not living up to these standards. Taking one's minimal responsibility is a necessary (first) step in being a trustworthy partner in social (or business) life. However, taking up one's minimal responsibility only generates predictability of one's behaviour - one can be expected to do what accepted standards proscribe - and therefore only generates anticipatory trust. The problem, however, in a changing food chain is that in order to be trustworthy one needs not only to be predictable but also responsive.

Being responsive might be understood as taking up more than minimal responsibility. In this context the idea of ideal responsibility might be helpful. Taking up ideal responsibility implies that one takes some (explicit or implicit) ideals as a compass for making specific behavioural choices. In ideal responsibility an actor acknowledges his own influence on a future state of affairs and determines and holds on to his own moral values concerning the issue at stake. Questions like 'In which world do we want to live?' and 'How do we want to treat animals and nature?' might be relevant in this context.

One might ask questions about the limits of moral responsibility. Some critics might be sceptical about what was described as ideal responsibility and conceive it as an 'unrealistic ideal'. One of the objects of moral communication between the different stakeholders in the food chain is to gain insight in each other's ideas about taking responsibility and - if possible - to develop common standards and ideals. Such an endeavour, however, faces some interesting problems. First, no shared operational definition of moral responsibility exists. Second, it is clear that companies - in a competitive market - are restricted in their possibilities. Third, the relation between self-regulation and government intervention is obscure.

### *Care*

One of the important features of trust, trustworthiness and responsibility is that focus is not only on actors and their behaviour but also on relations and interdependencies between different actors. The importance of relations and interdependencies has been a central focus of the ethics of care. The ethics of care draws special attention to unequal relations, vulnerability and dependency. The ethics of care might help us in developing our tools because communication within the food chain is communication between actors that are interdependent and between actors that are (sometimes) vulnerable.

According to proponents of care ethics dependency, vulnerability and interdependence are important facts of life (Verkerk 2003). In contrast to the ideal that informs many

moral and political theories, people are not always equal and autonomous. Therefore, the moral question of an ethics of care is not 'What, if anything, do I (we) owe to others?' but rather 'How can I (we) best meet my (our) caring responsibilities?' (Tronto, 1993; 137). This leads to the following elements of a moral relation:

- *Attentiveness*. This means that we should recognise the needs and concerns of others - others matter. Attentiveness requires that we know the needs of others and how those needs are affected by our own behaviour. Tronto says (1993; 128): 'evil can arise out of ignorance, either wilful or established habits of ignorance'. While Tronto describes attentiveness as 'other-directed', she acknowledges the prerequisite that one's own needs have to be sufficiently met before one is able to notice the needs of others at all. From this follows that attentiveness should also be self-directed. Caring for oneself is not the same as being selfish.
- *Responsibility*. Meeting one's own caring responsibilities is crucial in care ethics. The big questions are what one's responsibilities are and what to do in case of conflicting responsibilities. Questions of responsibility can become political, i.e. they can become matters of public debate. Discussion about and distribution of responsibility is crucial for care ethics.
- *Competence*. Recognising a need and feeling responsible is not enough. In the end it is important that needs are met. Therefore, competence of giving care is important as well.
- *Responsiveness*. As conditions of inequality and vulnerability exist and people are not all the same, it is important to practice empathy. One should be able to envision the other's frame of reference but not simply by presuming that the other is exactly like the self.

In ethical tools for moral communication these elements might function as process values.

### *Conclusion*

With regard to the focus of the different tools that we would like to develop we can conclude from this analysis of trust, responsibility and care that:

- The analysis of trust and trustworthiness supports the conclusion of chapter 1 that in order to facilitate moral processes in the food chain the emphasis should not be on a possible result, like trust or trustworthiness, but on the processes of moral communication;
- Since responsibility in the food chain is often obscure and object of differences in opinion that lead to tensions and conflicts, tools are needed to clarify responsibilities and facilitate communication about how responsibilities are taken;
- For facilitating moral communication in the food chain we should not only focus on distinct communicating actors but also on relations and interdependencies between these actors.

## 4.7 Existing Tools and Stakeholder Theory

Our project does not need to start from scratch. Some tools are already used in practical contexts and may help us. This section describes eleven tools that seem to have potential relevance for facilitating moral communication in the food chain. We think that these tools can help us to develop tools for facilitating moral communication in the food chain. Next to these eleven tools, some of the tools described by WP1 are also relevant for us, i.e. the ethical matrix. We will include these tools in our evaluative task.

The tools that we found can be grouped under five headings. We found tools for: 1) ethical exploration, 2) ethical decision-making, 3) ethical identity expression, 4) management of change, and 5) stakeholder dialogue. Since one could easily get the impression that we only need to adapt the last tool in the remainder of our work package, we will give special attention to the problems that stakeholder theory faces. The reason for this is not that we mean to discredit stakeholder dialogue but to show which problems need to be tackled in the next - evaluative - task.

### *Ethical exploration*

The first two tools that we selected are intended to facilitate ethical exploration:

- *Weston's Toolbox*. The toolbox is meant to offer wider practical skills than in traditional ethics in order to get ethical thinking 'unstuck'. The intended outcome is to find new and better solutions to moral conflicts, which do justice to all or most of the underlying values.
- *Value Clarification*. A method to clarify and develop individual values. It also promotes the development of a consistent set of values through a valuing process.

These tools are meant to open up ethical thinking and they could function in the first two phases of moral communication: self-clarification and understanding the others.

### *Ethical decision-making*

The next two ethical tools are about ethical decision-making:

- *Ethical Accounting (for Livestock Farms)*. This tool is a decision support system/management tool for individual farmers, involving value-based planning.
- *Stepwise Dilemma Solving*. This method addresses and solves moral problems in a structured and stepwise way, which facilitates discussion and decision-making.

These tools focus at deliberation within an organisation or a group that has to take a common decision. These tools structure the different options and the different values and they provide organisations with elements for responsiveness with regard to decision-making.

### *Ethical identity-expression*

The next three tools are used by organisations in the food chain in order to express and justify their position on certain moral issues. For our research project the introduction of new

values or changing existing values is also an important way to change the organisation. Value clarification in companies is an element of what Swanson (1999) calls a value-attuning culture that looks for ways to clarify values, expand and connect them and act upon them:

- *Normative Standards.* This is a method used to co-ordinate normative behaviour. Many normative standards are developed by organisations. We will present the Fair Trade movement as an example, because it is an organisation that is trying to convince other organisations to use a set of normative standards in conducting their business.
- *Ethical Codes.* Many organisations have formalised their standards of conduct in an ethical code. We will present the example of Unilever, a large food company, to illustrate this tool. In the next task of our research project we will use the ethical codes of more organisations in the food production chain like Nutreco and Nestlé.
- *Ethical Audits.* In this method companies ask (external) auditors to check whether they performed according to their self-proclaimed standards and ethical codes. The purpose of this can be a) keeping their standards up-to-date, b) stimulating ethical awareness, accounting or checking compliance within their organisations, or c) creating a firm ground for stakeholder communication.

These tools focus at explicating and creating openness in how a company handles ethical problems. By doing so, companies make explicit how that they take up their social and moral responsibility.

#### *Management of change*

The following tools are not uses as 'ethical tools' but they are related to the way organisations in the food production chain change over time. This usually means continuous improvement. It is impossible to stay competitive without inventing new ways to produce better and cheaper. All kinds of ways to change an organisation exist: hire new people, develop new products, change business processes, etc. The next three tools are standard methods to enhance quality in organisations:

- *Total Quality Management.* A method to improve the quality of the internal processes of an organisation. It is all about the insurance of continuous improvement.
- *ISO method.* The adoption of external standards, like the ISO 9000 series, in an organisation.
- *Benchmarking.* This method actively looks for best practices in the environment of the organisation. Benchmarking offers an external perspective in the quest for service quality.

These tools are meant to help companies to keep up with their environment. They help companies to become dynamic entities. Moral communication can be seen as a form of keeping up with the environment. Therefore, these tools might be of help for developing our communicative tools.

### *Stakeholder dialogue*

Stakeholder dialogue represents a relatively new approach to decision-making and problem-solving. Firms used to be rather closed to their environments, independently developing their policies. Their main partners were shareholders and clients. By using stakeholder dialogues they try to open up to other groups that have something at stake in the activities of a company:

- *Stakeholder dialogues.* This tool aims to increase transparency and trust in the relation between organisations and their stakeholders, and to organise more interactive forms of decision-making.

Companies that would like to employ stakeholder dialogue, however, need to answer the basic questions 'who is a stakeholder?' and 'what do we owe them?'. Stakeholder theory might help companies to answer these questions.

### *Stakeholder theory*

Stakeholder theory is about the relation between a corporation and others, the so-called 'stakeholders'. A common feature is the assumption that stakeholders include more than a firm's shareholders alone. The first question that a firm needs to ask in applying stakeholder theory is: 'Who are my stakeholders?'. Freeman (1984) defines stakeholder as 'any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation's purpose'. This already poses the problem that those who can affect and are affected are not necessarily the same. Furthermore, it is not clear whether or not a group or individual needs to be affected directly in order to qualify as a stakeholder. Would it also count as 'being affected', if one cares about what a corporation does and how it affects others?

It is argued that stakeholders need not be actively involved. Being vulnerable with respect to the issue at stake is said to be enough to qualify as a stakeholder: When is one vulnerable? Does one need to take an interest in the situation or is it enough that one has an interest in it? Thus, the question is: can entities such as animals or the environment be seen as stakeholders? Does the same hold true, e.g., for children or sick persons not able to act on their own behalf? These questions show that it is not at all clear how a firm should determine who are its stakeholders. It is helpful to distinguish three different ways in which stakeholder theories can look for an answer. They can consider the above questions as 'descriptive', 'instrumental' or 'normative' (Donaldson and Preston, 1995):

- Descriptive theories describe and sometimes explain the operations of companies in relation to affected parties. In order to answer the above-mentioned questions firms could, in a descriptive way, simply make an inventory of individuals and groups with whom they actually deal.
- When the stakeholder approach is used as a tool for efficient management, one may speak of instrumental theories. A central insight of (that kind of) stakeholder theory is that maintaining good communication with stakeholders is crucial for the efficient implementation of strategies. Stakeholders are those who might intervene with the implementation of a business decision or policy. In order to implement the decision or policy as smoothly as possible those parties have to be engaged one way or the

other. The instrumental understanding of the concept implies that only agents can be stakeholders. Stakeholders must be able to act upon the company or public decision-maker in question, otherwise the company or decision-maker does not need to worry about them: they are not considered stakeholders.

- When stakeholder theory is used normatively, it says what the relation of companies to affected parties should be and who or what should be counted as a stakeholder. Sometimes normative theories also say what moral and philosophical guidelines a company should follow.

For our purpose of enhancing moral communication in the food chain and between the food chain and consumers, it is obvious that the normative approach is needed. We do not merely wish to describe how things are. Our tools are meant for mutual amelioration of the values at hand. Thus, we are not so much interested in the responsibilities that people happen to take at a certain moment in time but rather in a process to improve the way that they take their responsibilities. Of course, in order to elaborate on this, it is important to know something about the values that people adhere to and about their situation. Before searching for normative guidelines, it is important to understand the situation of, e.g., the company. In that sense of knowing the context, descriptive stakeholder theory might be useful to answer the question of with whom company deals and how. Indirectly, instrumental stakeholder theory might also be relevant, because existing relations might be determined by a firm's strategic and instrumental considerations. This empirical information is, however, not an end in itself for our work package but instrumental in developing ameliorative communicative tools.

In order to generate a basis for a 'real' stakeholder dialogue the question is not whether a company sees its relation with a stakeholder as an instrumental device in order to perform well. The 'real' question is (Kaler, 2003) whether a company can accept role-specific responsibilities towards non-shareholders that are crucial to corporate identity. This means that living up to these responsibilities is an ultimate objective of corporate activity and not merely a strategic device or by-product of striving after other objectives. Also stockholder theory acknowledges role-specific duties towards non-shareholders, such as the requirement to pay employees their wages, provide customers with products, pay suppliers for their products, and contribute to the tax revenues of local communities. Only if one transcends these strategic uses of stakeholders, one will transcend stockholder theory. This seems a necessary precondition for a non-strategic stakeholder dialogue.

From this Kaler (2003) draws the conclusion that fulfilment of responsibilities towards stakeholders is the ultimate objective of corporate activity according to a stakeholder theory that aims at achieving a more equitable distribution of benefits among shareholders and non-shareholders. Serving the interests of stakeholders is what these responsibilities amount to. It is important to note that one can see serving interests as a 'task' rather than an 'achievement'; it is not a matter of 'yes or no' but of 'more or less'. As such, the aim is completely fulfilled only in so far as it is attuned to the maximum degree possible under the prevailing conditions. This is important because it opens up the possibility of dialogue about how to work on the task. It generates room for process-oriented approaches.

It is important for the following tasks of our work package to disclose the black box of stakeholder theory - and stakeholder approaches of companies - to normative investiga-

tion, comparison and enhancement. This is important because stakeholder approaches seem to play an important role in what companies describe as their engagement with ethical issues.

### *Conclusion*

With respect to the way that we can develop tools in this work package, we can conclude from the description of eleven practical tools and the more in-depth analysis of stakeholder theory that:

- An important task in the evaluation of the practical use of existing instruments (like stakeholder dialogues, standardisation and auditing) will be to clarify the normative basis of decisions about the scope (e.g. stakeholder identification, auditing standards) and the goals (creating support, informing those involved, understanding opposition and showing openness) of their application.
- An important part of the evaluation is to clarify the relation between structure and contents of ethical processes. It is clear that certain instruments focus specifically on procedural values, while others focus on substantive values. For facilitating moral communication both are necessary and therefore we need both kinds of tools.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

The work plan of WP3 stated: 'A trustworthy food chain is of vital importance for consumers' confidence in their daily food. The maintenance of this consumer trust is - in turn - of vital importance for primary producers, retailers and regulators in agriculture and food production'. Communication about the values involved in food production, their importance and their consequences for practical matters in the food chain, is necessary for gaining and keeping this trustworthiness. Value communication, however, is not without problems. It seems that corporations/firms have limited experience with this kind of moral communication and that tools to facilitate this communication are needed.

In this first task we have made a description of several existing tools and other stepping-stones that might be helpful in developing tools for improving this value communication. From this first descriptive task we have learned several things that will guide us in the next - evaluative - task of this work package.

The main conclusions that we draw from the descriptive task concern the central objective of the work package, facilitating moral communication in the food chain. With regard to this central objective we draw four conclusions:

- In order to facilitate moral processes in the food chain the emphasis should not be on a possible result, like trust or trustworthiness, but on the processes of moral communication;
- It is important to distinguish different stages of moral communication (self-clarification, understanding the other, comparison and communication), because each stage requires different tools;

- Communication is not only build on conceptual skills; social skills are equally important and we need to address their importance;
- The tools for facilitating moral communication in the food chain should not only focus on distinct stakeholders but also on their relations and interdependencies.

With regard to the different tools that we would like to develop in this work package, we draw five conclusions from the descriptive task:

- For self-clarification and understanding the others the role of real and perceived identities is important: tools are needed to construct and deconstruct identity and imago;
- For self-clarification and understanding the others the role of language and the way positions are framed are important: tools are needed to disclose the role of metaphors and frames in shaping identities;
- Actors in the food chain co-operate in a common food practice with more or less shared standards for food safety and food quality: communicative ethical tools need to build on initiatives to organise the food practice on the basis of common interests and responsibilities;
- Actors in the food chain also operate also as rivals in a competitive market. In these markets ethical standards, labels and trademarks function as competitive instruments: ethical tools need to allow a process of fair comparison of different standards in this competitive market;
- Responsibility in the food chain is often obscure and value differences lead to tensions and conflicts: tools are needed to clarify responsibilities and facilitate communication about the way responsibilities are taken.

With regard to the way that we can develop tools in this work package, we draw two conclusions from the descriptive task:

- It is an important part of the evaluation of the practical use of existing instruments (like stakeholder dialogues, standardization and auditing) to clarify the normative basis of decisions about the scope (e.g. stakeholder identification, auditing standards) and the goals (creating support, informing those involved, understanding opposition and showing openness) of their application.
- It is an important part of the evaluation to clarify the relation between structure and contents of ethical processes. It is clear that certain tools focus specifically on procedural values, while others focus on substantive values. For facilitating moral communication both are necessary and therefore we need both kinds of tools.

In section 4.2 of this report we defended that three kinds of tools need to be developed to facilitate the different phases of moral communication:

- Instruments that enable actors in the food chain to formulate their own answers to relevant questions;



- Instruments that enable actors in the food chain to understand the answers of others;  
and
- Instruments that enable actors in the food chain to start communication about emergent conflicts.

In the following tasks of this project we will have to a) clarify the character of our tools, b) design our different tools, and c) test them in practice.