Editorial

Richard P. Haynes

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From the editor

The current number has eight articles. The first three articles discuss issues about using GM crops. The next two are about animal welfare, followed by two articles on decisions about what farming practices farmers decide to use. Then there is an article on veganism and living well. The final article focuses on the issue of the best way to encourage future environmental education in dealing with wicked problems.

The first article, “Ethical discourse on the use of genetically modified crops: a review of academic publications in the fields of ecology and environmental ethics,” is by Daniel Gregorowius, Petra Lindemann-Matthies, and Markus Huppenbauer. The authors provide a comprehensive overview of the moral reasoning on the use of GM crops expressed in academic publications from 1975 to 2008 and the environmental ethical aspects in the publications were investigated. They found three type of moral concerns. The authors claim that the results of their study “may help to structure the academic debate and contribute to a better understanding of moral concerns that are associated with the key aspects of the ethical theories of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.”

The second article examines the “Assumptions behind the Deficit Model Type of Thinking: Ignorance, Attitudes, and Science Communication in the Debate on Genetic Engineering in Agriculture.” By the “deficit model of thinking,” the author, Marko Ahteensuu, means the claim that the general public’s negative attitudes towards modern science and technology are based on ignorance. The proposed remedy: scientists should communicate the facts to non-scientists. The “paper spells out and discusses four assumptions behind the deficit model type of thinking. The assumptions are: First, the public is ignorant of science. Second, the public has negative attitudes towards (specific instances of) science and technology. Third,

R. P. Haynes (✉)
The Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society, 6802 SW 13th St, Gainesville, FL 32608, USA
e-mail: rphaynes@ufl.edu

ignorance is at the root of these negative attitudes. Fourth, the public's knowledge deficit can be remedied by one-way science communication from scientists to citizens. In conclusion, the author argues that, rather than just rejecting the deficit model, altogether we should distinguish between cases in which these type of explanations and assumptions are warranted and cases in which they do not hold.

The third article is by Helena Valve. In "Qualified for Evaluation? A GM Potato and the Orders of Rural Worth," the author examines a small-scale attempt to support collective evaluation of a transgenic potato variety by investigating how the controversial object was associated with coordinating perspectives or "orders of worth" in two focus groups, and concludes with the suggestion that more attention needs to be put into organization and preparation of multi-stakeholder evaluations.

The next two articles focus on how animal welfare is conceptualized in organic farming. In "Concepts of Animal Health and Welfare in Organic Livestock systems," the authors, Mette Vaarst and Hugo F. Alroe explore how the special organic conceptions of animal welfare are related to the overall principles of organic agriculture. Their aim is to identify potential routes for future development of organic livestock systems in different contexts and with reference to the specific understanding of animal welfare in organic agriculture. They include two contrasting cases represented by organic livestock systems in northwestern Europe and farming systems in tropical low-income countries and they use these cases to explore the widely different challenges of organic livestock systems in different parts of the world.

In the second of these two article, Theofano Vetouli, Vonne Lund, and Brigitte Kaufmann, in "*Farmers' attitude towards animal welfare aspects and their practice in organic dairy calf rearing: a case study in selected Nordic farms,*" explore how calf welfare is approached in six different organic dairy farms and how far the concept of naturalness is implemented. In organic farming, animal welfare is conceptualized to include natural living, but in practice in dairy farms these conditions include early weaning, dehorning, or cow-calf separation soon after birth. The farms included in the study were located in Norway and Sweden, and a semi-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The authors conclude that the interviewed farmers approach the concept of welfare in various ways and state that "naturalness" is an aspect of animal welfare. "However, in practice in the calf rearing systems under study, only a few 'naturalness' aspects were implemented. Reasons for the observed discrepancy might lie in differing understandings of 'naturalness,' in economic restrictions and in other trade-offs resulting from production system inherent characteristics and in limited regulation concerning provision of natural living aspects."

In the sixth article ("Loyals" and "Optimizers"—shedding light on the decision for or against organic agriculture among Swiss farmers), Stefan Mann and Miriam Gairing use a survey of Swiss farmers to justify their claim that the "choice between organic and conventional agriculture for farmers is modeled as an ethical decision. Farmers are either loyal to one of the systems or they optimize between systems." They use a probit analysis to show that "loyal farmers have larger farms than optimizers. Loyal organic farmers receive less direct payments than optimizers, which confirms the utility-maximizing pattern of the latter group."

In the seventh article, Christopher Ciocchetti argues that “many philosophical arguments for veganism underestimate what is at stake for humans who give up eating animal products.” In “Veganism and Living Well,” the author critically examines the veganist claim that all that’s at stake for humans is taste and they characterize taste in simplistic terms. Thus they underestimate the reasonable resistance that arguments for veganism will meet, because they believe that taste is trivial. Ciocchetti examines each of the arguments that claim that culinary practices are a form of artistic achievement and that our diet forms part of our identity, or the claim that a specific diet facilitates honest engagement with the world. He does this to determine if they can defend the “meaningful omnivore’s” position and he concludes that they cannot.

In the final article, Matt Ferkany and Kyle Powys Whyte argue for the importance of future research on how environmental education can incorporate participatory virtues to equip future citizens with the virtues they will need to deliberate about wicked, environmental problems.