

“The Future of Food and Farming: Challenges and Opportunities.”

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Documentation



Die Gründungsmitglieder des GFFA Berlin e. V. sind:



Communication and knowledge as production factors

How can innovations and technological progress best be used to ensure food security in ways that are environmentally and socially sustainable? Is the use of better technology the only reliable way to food security? These issues were discussed at the International Business Panel, organized by the **Global Forum for Food and Agriculture Berlin (GFFA Berlin e.V.)** in the context of the GFFA and the International Green Week 2016 in Berlin.

Key note speaker, Cornelis Pieter Veerman, Professor at the Dutch Universities of Tilburg and Wageningen, referred to major developments and their impact they pose on the future of food and farming: climate change, whose effect, like global warming, sea-level-rise, decreased yields and biodiversity will worsen in the decades to come, freshwater scarcity, demographic developments leading to considerable food demand and rising demand for sustainable energy and shifting of geopolitical power in favour of Asia and to the detriment of the USA and Europe. Having stated these concerns, Mr. Veerman brought up to discussion few areas of solution: Food production needs to be increased where demand is sharply rising, i.e. in Asia and Africa and "local production should be stimulated". Moreover he called for more agronomic and agritech research investments and finally a great effort is needed to raise the level of enterprise in the agri-sector through education.



Professor Martin Qaim of the University of Göttingen optimistically noted that thanks to productivity growth and increase in income in the agricultural sector, the share of undernourished people in world population dropped from 21% in 1990 to 11% today. However, he stressed that sustainable production growth not only depends on modern technologies but also on its adequate application and warns against shortcomings in technology transfer. Here, the industry is asked to help e.g. through the provision of high-yield-seeds or through facilitating the market access, Frank Terhorst, Global Head of Seed, Bayer AG, stated.

The most crucial question for Dr. Jason Clay, Vice President of World Wildlife Fund, USA, is how the ecological footprint of agriculture can be reduced. He pointed out that food production has resulted in not only a 70% loss of biodiversity, but also has tremendous impacts on water pollution and soil degradation. From his point of view an efficient use of natural resources needs to go hand in hand with a reduction of food losses and more consumer consciousness. In stating, that the bottom of 25% of producers represented a mere 10% of output but at the same time 50% of impact on natural resources, he claimed to shift the focus and "best invest in the ones most behind."



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Former president of the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), Joris Baecke, sees lifelong learning and knowledge sharing as keys of sustainable agriculture and summarized his view in the concise statement: “Not cash is king, but knowledge is king.” He explained further: “To me, sustainable agriculture means that I will handing over the farm in a better state than it was in when I took over.”

Jean Kaahwa, an Ugandan farmer, who is also board member of several young farmers’ associations, clarified that traditional ways of production were increasingly being replaced by inclusive business models. In fact, there are many well-trained young people from the African middle class, who nowadays are re-entering the agricultural sector, because they consider it as an opportunity to earn money. “It is not agriculture that young people are interested in but agribusiness.”, he said. He also referred to the role of technology as solution that long has been put into practice to face structural changes, as for example through young farmers communicating on livestock diseases or crop pests via what’s app groups.



In this context, C.P. Veerman added, that social media opens up the world to everyone at very little cost. This implies, that people no longer resign themselves to their fates now they know that life is better elsewhere. It is thus all the more crucial that the agricultural industry and politics stay in dialogue with farmers.

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The Organizers

The International Business Panel Discussion is organized annually by the GFFA Berlin e.V. The association Global Forum for Food and Agriculture Berlin e.V. was founded by the German agriculture and food sector in December 2011. By establishing this organization, the sector is emphasizing its commitment to improving the global food supply and to protecting an environmentally sustainable production basis.



The founding members are:

- Federation of German Food and Drink Industries (BVE)
- German Farmers' Association (DBV),
- German Agricultural Society (DLG),
- German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)
- Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA)

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