



ACADEMIA ENGELBERG

Media Release

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„What will we be putting on our tables in 2050?“

„Will it be a high-tech burger from the food laboratory, or genetically modified vegetables, or homegrown vegetables and meat only on Sundays?“, asked moderator Gabriela Amgarten the four prominent panelists at the Academia Engelberg Foundation’s public evening event with approximately 240 interested parties attending.

„One thing is certain: by the year 2050, demand for food will increase. What the supply will look like at that time is uncertain. There are many scenarios, some of which are: new high-tech food or a total specialization whereby for example Brazil will be producing beef for the whole world. Or, an eco-revolution will take place,“ explained Bernd Wilke, Top Topic Manager Food Security at Swiss Re, who provided the foundation for the subsequent debate. He presented impressive figures substantiating global developments including the continuous population growth, rising meat consumption, loss of fertile agricultural land as well as the consequences of climate change. Thus, only one third of the products in our supermarkets are from domestic production. Also 62% of our water, incorporated in food like water melons, is currently imported to Switzerland.

How is food supply changing?

A fictional lunch on Saturday, October 15, 2050 showed the variety of the future Swiss food supply. On the table of Christian Hofer, Assistant Director of the Federal Office for Agriculture, there is a thin beefsteak, smaller than today’s but from declared Swiss grassland production, as well as vegetables from landless production - produced with industrial waste heat - and foreign durum wheat pasta, also declared. On the plate of the University of Basel’s Professor Patricia Holm’s lands a nice piece of fish, either self-caught in the Arctic or from a local, well-managed fish farm. For Andreas Graber of Urban Farmers, Saturday is vegetarian day. He serves his family homegrown vegetables and fish from his own aquaculture. Lucerne-based futurologist Georges T. Roost enjoys roasted, protein-containing grasshoppers as an appetizer. Thereafter, he wants to strengthen his by then already aging brain with ‘brain vegetables’, a joint project of Nestlé and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne. Additionally, there is a hamburger made



from stem cells cultivated in a bioreactor. The vegetables are from a nearby farm.

Subsequently, the need for a debate on food security was discussed. Although we live in a protected space, we cannot remain indifferent to what is happening abroad. The participants argued from different viewpoints in favor of consumers' maturity, careful use of resources – here, Hofer could also imagine a loosening of the current legal framework for agriculture -, as well as more personal responsibility in dealing with food, for example when shopping or consuming endangered species.

There are many possible scenarios

While Graber believes that consumers must be allowed to keep their freedom of choice and decide on their own how much they want to pay for something, Holm argued in favor of less wasting of food, promoting regional products, and refraining from eating endangered fish species like red tuna, wild salmon, and shark. Hofer sees the future in the quantitative protection of soil, the use of new technologies, the expansion of trade as well as the transfer of know-how in emerging and developing countries. In Roos' view, society's development is decisive for its future actions. Professor Jacques Dubochet of the University of Lausanne concluded: „If we look back to the year 1980, how were we feeding ourselves? Or even further, to the year 1945, the end of the Second World War, and further back to the year 1910, what would we have said then about the future of food security in Switzerland? My conclusion: we don't know anything, and the reality will be completely different from what we imagine today.“ Winding up the discussion, Dr. Dominik Galliker, Vice President of the Academia Engelberg Foundation, thanked those present for their lively participation and invited them to a nightcap offered by the Hotel Europe in Engelberg where the discussion of high-tech burgers, future agricultural types of production and the current and future consumption of meat and fish continued for some time.

<Box info> Food Security in the Year 2050

The 13th Dialogue on Science of the Academia Engelberg Foundation is dedicated to the topic of food security. How can availability, access and consumption of food be secured in light of the rapidly growing population? International experts examine whether agriculture and production technologies are prepared for this population growth. The Congress in the monastery village of Engelberg offers a platform for exchange and networking with personalities from all over the world and for developing possible solutions to-



gether. For three days, 180 experts from science, business, politics, and society from major Swiss companies and from domestic and international universities hold interdisciplinary and intergenerational discussions from different perspectives on the topic of food security in Engelberg.

<Box info> A Bridge between Science and Society

Basic findings from science frequently meet with strong reservation and suspicion among the general population. With its interdisciplinary dialogue, the Academia Engelberg Foundation contributes to the building of a new foundation of trust between science and the public at large. Each fall, personalities from science, business, culture, politics, and society meet at the annual conference in Engelberg, Switzerland. Additionally, projects resulting from the outcomes of the conferences are realized and in-depth follow-up events organized. For further information: www.academia-engelberg.ch.

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[Images and copy from the Conference are continually available here.](#)

Video channel: http://www.academia-engelberg.ch/videos_2014.php5

Additional information for members of the media and arrangement of interviews:

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