

To: Friends and Colleagues

From: Oscar Forero and Lawrence Busch, CESAGEN

Subject: Invitation to a workshop on the future of the Codex Alimentarius

The global food system is being challenged by climate change, environmental degradation, new disease vectors, counterfeit goods, and --last but not least-- new genetic and genomic technologies that permit molecular transformations of the food we eat. The *Codex Alimentarius Commission* (CAC) was established by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in food trade. Moreover, the Codex is named in the World Trade Organization's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement as the central policy making body on these issues. Hence, the Codex plays and will continue to play a central role in determining how these various food system challenges are met. This letter is to invite you to a one-day debate on this issue of vital concern to everyone.

The debate should be of interest to those persons and organisations concerned about food security policies and more specifically the role of the Codex in ensuring food safety globally. This includes policy makers from government, the private sector, and various non-governmental organisations, biotechnology and biosafety researchers, as well as social scientists, and science journalists. Interested students are welcome as well.

The Speakers:

Dr Robert Verkerk, director of Alliance for Natural Health, and **Ezzaddine Boutrif**, Chief of Food Quality and Standards Service, Food and Nutrition Division, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) will discuss and debate on the claimed benefits, risks and opportunities brought by implementation of Codex Alimentarius and related policy. Given the sensitivity of the issue of food security strategy in the context of global climate change, natural resources exhaustion and soil depletion, the assessment of the food system's policy development and implementation processes is of the utmost importance.

How to Participate:

Participation in the workshop is free but registration is required. The venue will be the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) building, Lancaster University, on 16 March 2010. Registered participants will pick up a badge in the foyer (IAS building, 11-12 am) and then have a buffet lunch there (12am – 1pm). The workshop will take place in meeting room 3 in the same building from 1-6 pm. Professor Lawrence Busch will introduce our distinguished guests and then each of them will deliver a presentation regarding *Codex Alimentarius* influence on the policies of production, distribution and consumption of food. The

presentations will relate to these critical issues: (1) How could government agencies (and the State in general) meet their responsibilities in relation to food security by implementing the Codex and related policies? (2) How can stakeholders be reassured that governments will not infringe on human rights and guarantee a sustainable food supply if corporations are to be allowed to erect standards regimes that parallel and even supercede those of the state and manage the value chains of the food system? And, (3) how can other stakeholders, besides corporations and the Food Safety Agency (or equivalent government agencies in other countries) participate in designing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing private standards regimes?

Dr Boutriff knows from the inside the intricacies, difficulties and opportunities that arise when providing technical assistance to FAO member countries in all areas related to food control, consumer protection, safety assessment of food additives and contaminants, food handling and food science. Dr Boutriff is in a privileged position to assess the effects of Codex Alimentarius on the global food system and will be sharing his insights with us.

Dr Robert Verkerk will outline the processes that have contributed to the development of a globalised food supply and will argue that the transition to such systems can not only adversely impact human health but may also disadvantage smaller food producers and retailers. Dr Verkerk will suggest mechanisms to influence Codex Alimentarius guidelines and standards, and reveal what he considers to be the greatest priorities if governments, the medical establishment and communities are to effectively deal with largely preventable, nutritionally-related chronic diseases.

After a 45 minute presentation from each speaker we will have a short coffee break (15') after which the organizers will further interrogate our panellists. Questions from the public will be welcome on the day but priority will be given to questions formulated by registered participants that are posted to us (O.Forero@lancaster.ac.uk) before the end of the day on Friday 12th March. Larry and Oscar will categorise and group the questions, optimising the debate time and assuring all main concerns from participants are attended to. We will have dinner with our guests at Lancaster House (7,30 pm).

If you are interested in attending this workshop, please register by replying to this e-mail expressing your interest (Registration closes 16 February 2010). Please indicate if you are attending dinner (£28) and if you require help in booking a place to stay. Although accommodation cost is under your own expense when booking through us (before the 16 February) you will be able to get a discount (£80 p/night) at Lancaster House. There are visitor's parking areas (pay and display) at several sites in the University. If you are staying at Lancaster House you could leave your car there and do a 10 minutes walk to IAS building.

Please copy your e-mail to O.Forero@lancaster.ac.uk.

Looking forward to hearing from you.