International Research Network for Food Quality and Health

Seminar the 17th of January, from 09.00-10.00 am CET at zoom

True Cost Accounting (TCA) and potential positive contributions from organics to reduce hidden costs for health, climate and biodiversity

Join Zoom Meeting
https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/68150964858?pwd=X1KwzbIesdvQbWl4n9yjqGlA5DTFhz.1

Meeting ID: 681 5096 4858
Passcode: 853344

The workshop is free of charge

Program:

09.00-09.05 am welcome by FQH Carola Strassner

09.05-09.35 am

09.35-09.55 am discussions in plenum or breakout-rooms (dependent on the numbers of attendants)

Jostein is Attorney at Law with more than 20 years' experience in international business development, cooperation, networking and negotiations.

After his business carrier Jostein started up and managed for 12 years an integrated organic farming initiative growing vegetables, fruits and berries, an organic food shop, bakery, juicery and providing work opportunities on the farm for unemployed people and refugees from foreign countries.

From 2014 Jostein is head of BERAS International Foundation that focus on research, development, education, implementation and communication of results and practical examples within the concepts of Ecological Regenerative Agriculture, Learning Centres for Sustainable Food Societies and Diet for a Green Planet. BERAS has an international network first of all in the Baltic Sea Region but also extending to India (Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Ladakh) Dominican Republic, Haiti, Tanzania and China.

09.55-10.00 am wrap-up, presentation of next workshop and goodbye

Abstract

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and other renown institutions such as the Food and Land Use Coalition, The Food System Economics Commission, The Rockefeller Foundation, IFOAM Organics International and WWF have developed the concept of True Cost Accounting for the hidden cost of food (TCA).

The stipulated monetary cost is estimated at 12 - 19 thousand billion USD on top of global food expenditure related to health, climate and biodiversity.

With funding from the Axel and Margaret Ax: son Johnson Foundation for Science, a team in Beras Internation Foundation have reviewed around 50 scientific papers, 13 of TCA and the rest on impacts and opportunities in health, climate and biodiversity and with a focus on the need to change dietary patterns and the potential role of organics. Examples of research papers on dietary patterns and organic are Tilman & Clark, the French BioNutriNet Sante study, the FiBL DOK Trial and Meta studies by Rahman and Jiang together with research by A. Granstedt et. al from Sweden.

The stipulated monetary cost is estimated at 12 - 19 thousand billion USD on top of global food expenditure related to health, climate and biodiversity.

TCA is a holistic and systemic way of measuring and valuing the environmental, social, health and economic costs and benefits generated by food systems to facilitate better decisions by policy makers, businesses, farmers, investors and consumers.

It is a methodology that, in addition to market transactions, measures and values all flows into and out of agricultural systems, including those not captured by market transactions, so-called hidden costs or externalities. Valuation can be either qualitative or quantitative, and in possible cases monetary.
Our findings are most promising and suggest a pathway and concrete measures to significantly decrease the hidden cost of food as follows:

- a dietary pattern with less refined sugar, fats and oils and meat and more plant rich food will significantly reduce health and environmental costs (Tillman & Clark in Nature 2014)

- eating organic/ an organic lifestyle is associated with significant less negative health risks such as for overweight and obesity (-23/ 31%), metabolic syndrome (-31%), type II diabetes (-35%) and risk of cancer (-25%) (The French BioNutrinetSanté study with 12 published research papers)

- organic food contains less residues of pesticides (Meta studies by Rahman et. al and Jiang et.al)

organic/biodynamic farming systems have up to 60% less emissions of greenhouse gases and have more soil biodiversity (The Swizz based Research Institutes of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and their 45-year DOK trial)

The Swedish researcher Arthur Granstedt et al. shows that net-zero greenhouse gas emissions can be achieved with ecological recycling agriculture, where greenhouse gas emissions are offset by, among other things, carbon sequestration in the soil.

TCA as an eye-opener and motivator for concrete action and opening the next phase for organic.

The price we as consumers pay for food in the shop does not reflect the true cost. We and the society at large "pay" in addition the negative impact on health, the climate and environment.

We have demonstrated that organic farming and food significantly can reduce the hidden costs.

There is a broad scientific consensus that diets should shift to more plant rich patterns. Taking into account that organic food contains less residues of pesticides the dietary shift should include also a shift to organic.

It is our opinion that the price of organic food, all aspects included, is less than food from monoculture agriculture with the use of herbicides, pesticides and mineral fertilizer.

The emerging understanding of the science and logic behind True Cost Accounting for the hidden costs of food will open the pathway to the next phase of organic.

In their report published February 2019 "Full Cost Accounting to Transform Agriculture and Food Systems" IFOAM Organics International made this important statement:

"*Some people consider it unethical to value everything in monetary terms. In the organic sector, we recognize that the currency of nature is life itself and that many phenomena cannot be expressed through money alone. The value of biodiversity, for example, is more than the value of its ecosystem services, and the value of animal rights and welfare is more than the costs of installing management practices that promote animal health.*

Money, however, is universally understood as a way to assign value in societies across the world, it is a 'language' that politicians, businesses and consumers alike understand. *Financial incentives and disincentives are powerful ways to influence what people and businesses do and how they do it. Notwithstanding its limitations in accurately reflecting societal costs and benefits, Full Cost Accounting is an important tool for change and offers an alternative to our current, predominantly profit-centric model.*"