



Peasant Rights are Human Rights!



Photo credit: viacampesina.org

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted the Declaration of Peasant Rights and People living in Rural Areas. On December 17, 2018, the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly took the final vote, strengthening the rights of small-scale farmers and rural communities in unprecedented ways. The declaration was adopted with 121 votes in favor, 8 votes against and 54 abstentions and now represents a legal instrument for the implementation of peasant rights on the national level. According to the declaration: **States shall respect, protect and fulfill the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.**

The long way up to this decision started by the international peasant movement La Via Campesina and its allies, such as FIAN, CETIM or Farmers Association of Schwäbisch Hall. In 2018, several decisive steps had been taken up to the successful adaptation; the text had been finalized at the 5th Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group of the Human Rights Council (HRC). The declaration is seen as a crucial to the struggle for a dignified live of rural people and small-scale producers.

Source: Foundation House of Farmers, Schwäbisch Hall/ Farmers Association of Schwäbisch Hall, Germany.
Further Information: <http://www.global-peasants-rights.com>

The 7th German Sensory day in Hamburg

Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sensorik (DGSens) is a non-profit association comprising of 230 members from industry, universities and institutions that are interested in sensory evaluation in Germany. Their vision is to promote research in sensory science and encourage further developments of sensory analysis and consumer research in Germany. Since 2012, DGSens has been organizing an outstanding annual symposium under the title of "German Sensory Day; Deutsche Sensorikstage". Although this event is at the national level, it has been achieving great interest in Germany, Austria and Switzerland during the last seven years.

This year, DGSens has organized their 7th meeting in Hamburg on 25th-26th October with approx. 100 participants from industry and research field. The event was organized by the board of DGSens: Dr. Dirk Minkner (Chairman), Thomas Krahl, Dr. Ing. Andrea Maaßen, Prof. Dr. Guido Ritter, Prof. Dr. Andreas Scharf.

The DGSens symposium provided a platform for students, specialists, experts, as well as managers to introduce information on new technologies and developments in sensory evaluation, neuroscience, consumers' psychology and behavior, health, and Chemosensory. The event started with a workshop which held very insightful and interesting lectures put together by experienced sensory experts on different aspects, including as Sensory Reporting & Com-



munication, SWOT Analysis, among many others.

Photo credit: www.dgsens.de



During the second day, DGSens gave young scientists the opportunity to present their research projects and innovative ideas as an oral presentation and posters. At the end of the 7th Deutsche Sensoriktag, three of the best young researchers' presentations were honoured and awarded the "Urkunde für hervorragende leistung" with a certificate and trophy. The three young researchers awarded are: Diana Ismael: "Investigating the differences in consumers' emotions towards organic and conventional food: A study of a cognitive survey and sensory evaluation"; Tarek Butt: "Vergleich der sensorischen Produkträume von geschulten Prüfpersonen und Konsumenten durch External Preference Mapping und CATA-Methode"; Fabian Westen: "The Sense".

A Heath Magic Tool or an Environment Monster? "Gene Drives": An in-prospect technology that may defeat malaria



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The U.N. conference on biodiversity in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh provided a platform to discuss at length the gene-drive technology as a new technology to defeat malaria. Gene-drive is based on genetic engineering and aims at modifying genes of certain species.

In 2017, more than 200 million people around the planet suffered from malaria. According to the Gates Foundation, most of them were children in Africa. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has launched a program called Target Malaria. This program uses the gene-drive technology to genetically modify malaria-carrying mosquitoes to reduce the spread of this disease. One example of the application of these genetical modifications is to produce infertile offspring from the engineered mosquitoes.



The gene-driven method has always been a broad, controversial topic within the science world, even though its advocates cannot provide guarantees that this tool is ready to be applied safely in the environment. During the Conference of the Parties, there has been a prolonged debate between opponents and advocates of gene-diver technology. Opponents described the gene-diver as a “slippery business” that may cause harm to the ecological systems and even to the indigenous cultures. They called for a moratorium on the gene-drive field experiments. Jim Thomas, who is one of the opponents and a supporter of the moratorium, emphasized the importance of obtaining consent from people who may be affected by the application of the gene-drive technology field experiment. Similarly, Mariann Bassegy-Orovwuje, chair of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa declared that: “In Africa, we are all potentially affected, and we do not want to be lab rats for this exterminator technology.”

On the contrary, advocates defend gene-driver technology and explained that it is not a magic solution, but rather a complementary tool. According to Kevin Esvelt, a molecular biologist at MIT and a pioneer of gene-drive, it is “better that we use DNA than potentially inhumane pesticides.” Moreover, the gene-drive was also supported by representatives of some African nations. They declared that leaders of the African Union encourage this technology, accept its benefits, and understand that no new technology goes without risk.

After two weeks of extended discussion, it was approved that gene-drive will continue with its tests, however under stricter controls. The decision underlined the importance of confirming that the application of re-engineered organisms demonstrates no hazards. In addition, it was decided to restrict any field work with the requirement of obtaining a “free, prior and informed consent” of the population who may be affected by the trials. Though, the form of the consent was not defined. However, the results of the discussions were a relief for gene-driver supporters who came out safely without moratorium or any other restriction that prevent the program from going forward.