THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS COMMITTEES IN AGRICULTURE

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SUMMARY

The concept of an ethics committee has been one of the instruments that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in medical ethics. There are a wide range of committees, and some play roles in policy formation, some in development of guidelines, and others in resolution of specific ethical cases. They have been useful in medicine, and can be useful in the future in resolution of ethical issues in food and agriculture. The most well known ethics committee in the United Nations system is the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee (IBC) that was created in 1993. It was an external ethics committee, functioning as a forum for debate and reflection, and for the elaboration of UNESCO’s normative actions. Internal and external ethics committees can work as think tanks on ethical issues in an open and transparent style. One of the principles of ethics is transparency, and true public reflection should be open to observers, and to outside input as well. There are different possible roles for ethics committee and the problems which it must debate are:
- the recognition of people and communities, and respect for their autonomy;
- human beings are members of the biological community;
- our heritage for the future is important to balance with the present needs;
- the ethical principle of beneficence demands action to eliminate hunger;
- resolving cultural and religious differences in the use of animals;
- the necessity for an international cooperation in the research on the environmental aspects;
- resolving the conflict between individual and collective interests in global agriculture.

Food and food products of agriculture should not be considered as simple tradable goods, because this is the key ingredient for the security and survival of people. Because agriculture itself is an activity of human beings modifying the environment it is necessary to respect the ethical values and principles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY