

Food Ethics: A Primer

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ABSTRACT: *Food is used in expressing social relations in many ways. Ethics deals with reasoning and judging about rights and wrongs in relations. Food ethics is related to agriculture, its production, marketing, distribution, preparation, and consumption. Attention to ethical choices in food consumption is growing throughout the world. This paper provides a brief introduction to food ethics.*

KEY WORDS: *food, food ethics, food policy, ethical analysis*

I. INTRODUCTION

Food is important for human survival. It is a basic biological necessity of life. Food is a popular subject in the life sciences, agriculture, economy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Food may be related to culture, sustainability, memory, meaning, pleasure, politics, exclusion and inclusion, biotechnology, identity, care, medicine, trade, distinction, table manners, agriculture, public relations, nature, sex, shopping, innovation, logistics, science, cooking, globalization, gifts, health, animal welfare, justice, etc. [1].

Several ways of examining practices of food production and food intake have been developed over the years. Technological advances, globalization, urbanization, processing, and manufacturing have changed how we interact and think about food. Food products have been improved and refined. Our relationship with food products is changing. Some developments in the agricultural and food sciences have led to the emergence of a new academic discipline: food ethics [2].

Food studies in anthropology, sociology, and philosophy reveal that people think about food in many different ways. We think about food in at least three ways [3]. First, the consumption of food usually takes place under social circumstances. As culture, food is a part of the relations between human beings. Second, a lot of attention is paid to transforming food from its natural to its prepared form. Through cooking food nature is transformed into culture. Third, intellectual activity is used to rationalize food production and food processing.

II. ETHICS

In simple terms, ethics involves doing the right thing. Ethical issues are crucial in relation to food choices, which are simply a set of decisions that we make. Food and ethics converge in everyday practices. Ethics is concerned about the good life on earth with and for others to cover the good life in fair food production practices. It has to do with the safeguarding and promotion of good health. Food ethics provides ethical analysis for human conduct in the food production, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food. It is about caring for others. It includes the ethics of the environment, the society, and others as they are related to food. It is fairness in relation to food distribution. Food ethics is not new. For years, religious organizations incorporate moral and ethical principles in their food laws. For example, the Bible and Quran state the wrongfulness of individuals' eating certain things. Regardless of their religious affiliations, human beings are endowed with reason that enables them to distinguish between right and wrong. Recent concerns over food ethics have been made urgent by the fact that environmental crisis is touching agricultural production and people of every nation. Modern food ethics transcends religion and culture. The food industry exercises great influence over society and has become an agent for social change. Food ethics serves as a tool for decision making in the food industry, which exists mainly to feed people and must act in a socially responsible manner. The food industry considers consumer as king [4].

III. AREAS OF FOOD ETHICS

Ethics is a system of principles and values concerning right and wrong behavior. Food ethics is ethical consideration in regard to food. The ethical dimensions of food include food security, food safety, and food law.

- **Food Security:** Food security is a fundamental human right. It deals with the just and fair supply of food to human beings. It means that you are not worried about when the next meal is coming, nor do you need to cut back on food in order to pay the bills. Governments around the globe have a moral responsibility to feed the people under their jurisdiction through food self-sufficiency, which is the nation's ability to provide basic food for its citizens [5]. For poor people, securing a food entitlement is fundamental to their daily functioning.
- **Food safety:** Food safety is the joint responsibility of everyone involved in the food supply chain from farm to the consumers. It is particularly a public and moral responsibility of the foodservice industry and the government entities providing food products. It is a top priority for consumers who buy food products online. This deals with the safety of the food. Even good foods can sometimes harm us to varying degrees; some foods may cause choking or lead to a serious illness [6]. Food safety policy is an effort to protect and enhance the public health.
- **Food Law:** Law and ethics constitute two sides of the same coin and are not different from each other. Values of fairness, equity, justice, honesty, humanity, and dignity are crucial to the law. Food law protects the rights of consumers and defines the responsibilities of food industry helping to ensure that food is safe [7].

IV. CHALLENGES

Some challenges face the implementation of food ethics in practice. These include poverty, hunger, and ever-shrinking resources. Developing nations face some challenging in complying with the basic principles of food ethics [8]. Food ethics is still a highly unfamiliar concept in some countries. People often look to governments and public policy for providing solutions and establishing trust. Education of food ethics should cover in depth awareness of food ethics necessary for the production, circulation, and distribution processes.

V. CONCLUSION

Food is a matter of personal interest for everyone. Food ethics is the ethical thinking in regards to food. It is a newly emerging academic discipline. It is crucial because it provides checks and balances between producer, retailer, and consumer. Modern food ethics includes issues about animal. For more information about food ethics, one should consult books in [9-12] and the journal exclusively devoted to it: *Food Ethics*.

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