WN *Feedback*

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WN letters editing
Interactivity!



Here is Isabela Sattamini editing Barbara Burlingame's letter for this month's WN letters section. Starting as from this month, we plan to be fully interactive

From Isabela Sattamini, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Hello to all readers of *World Nutrition* and to all Association members. As from this month and this new look (we hope you like it) I am *WN* letters editor. I'm pleased with this month's letters section and hope you are too. Our policy is that *WN* letters usually respond to or comment on contributions to *WN*, which as you see now includes a news section, and also the 'As I see it' column by Philip James and the 'What do you think?' column by Geoffrey Cannon. We particularly welcome letters from people whose work is mentioned or whose field of interest is discussed in our commentaries and other contributions. As well as this though, we will carry letters that are original contributions, especially on topical subjects.

Since its beginning in May 2010, most issues of *WN* have included letters. Now we want a lot more. We are a journal of comment and ideas, discussion and debate, and

many of our commentaries and other contributions invite responses. Part of my job now is to encourage letters, but please don't wait to be contacted.

A bit about me. I have been responsible for Association members' profiles since these were revived in September 2011, so at the rate of 6 profiles a month, I have worked with close to 100 members since that time. I am also one of the four young Association members, with Jean-Claude Moubarac, Mayya Husseini, and Seva Khambadkone, who write the 'I get around' column on the home page, each once every four months. This work continues. Also I was privileged and thrilled to be part of the organisation of the *World Nutrition Rio2012* conference a year ago, in my home city of Rio de Janeiro. During this time I have been supported and encouraged by Fabio Gomes and Sabrina Ionata, and by Geoffrey Cannon, who keeps telling me that I should be very firm in pursuing busy people and asking them to write letters!

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The New Nutrition Science

Work well done for now and the future

From Claus Leitzmann, Giessen, Germany

The column in last month's issue by Geoffrey Cannon (1) brought back strong memories of our work, with many other colleagues. Athens in 1991 was when he and I first met, at the 6th conference of the Federation of European Nutrition Societies. He liked what I had to say about sugar, and I was impressed by his book on *The Politics of Food* (2). We stayed in touch and met again at the 2001 17th International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) congress in Vienna, shortly after which we decided to give the science of nutrition a necessary broad foundation (3).

One beginning of our work were the concepts already taught at Giessen, of Wholesome Nutrition and Nutrition Ecology (4,5). In addition to health in the biological sense, these involve the dimensions of society, ecology and economy. They also include the whole agriculture, food and nutrition system, such as production, harvesting, preservation, storage, transport, processing, packing, trade, distribution, preparation, composition, consumption and disposal.




Claus Leitzmann (above) and (back row, at right) with two IUNS presidents, the Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò, and others, at the Giessen workshop

Our workshop at Schloss Rauischholzhausen in April 2005 culminated in the *Giessen Declaration* (6), which integrates all activities that interact with food and nutrition. The formal entrance to the castle is shown in the picture above, right. This was possible because of the participation and engagement of experts from fields ranging from agriculture to philosophy, from climate science to natural history, and from politics to banking. Many colleagues at the workshop had deep experience of engaging with international agencies, national governments, and industry. Just a few of the participants are shown above. They include Mark Wahlqvist and Ibrahim Elmadfa, IUNS presidents 2001-2005 and 2009-2013. We also gained much from the participation of our benefactor, the Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò (centre in the picture), and from the work of administrator Elvira Kratz, standing beside me.

The *Giessen Declaration* was initially presented later in 2005 at the 18th IUNS congress in Durban and then again at the First World Public Health Nutrition Congress in 2006 in Barcelona. The conceptual framework of the New Nutrition Science is now built into the thinking of relevant United Nations agencies and other authoritative organisations, and is part of the working agenda of the World Public Health Nutrition Association.

The practical part of this vision is the setting of personal priorities. In addition to governments and other powerful players, it is people as purchasers and consumers, family and community members, and as citizens, who have responsibility for the future of the planet. Every food purchase is a ballot for the quality of our life and that of our children and of future generations.

If we do not act who will? Visions without actions remain illusions.

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From Tony McMichael, Canberra, Australia



Tony McMichael grappling with a key passage in the Giessen Declaration (left) and with fellow Giessen workshop participants after the work was done

Yes, very good to be reminded of this pilgrims' trail (1), in which I played a part. Meanwhile, we are working away on this general broad front. In February we published the WHO technical report 976, on *Research Priorities for the Environment, Agriculture and Infectious Diseases of Poverty* (2).

This has completed four years of annual meetings, much email discussion, and heroic coordination by Colin Butler. (I chaired the working group, for the WHO-based Tropical Disease Research Program).

Food production, nutrition, poverty and health are central to the more integrated systems-based approach we are trying to nurture, in thinking, research and practice concerning the processes and risk of emerging infectious diseases, especially in poorer populations around the world.

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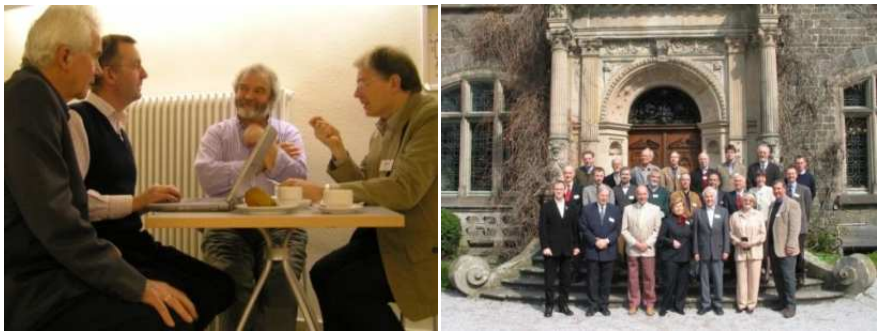
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From Colin Tudge, Oxford. UK



Colin Tudge (left above, centre) enjoying an exchange during the Giessen workshop and (right) in the middle of the second row for the group picture

Many thanks for the kind words in Geoffrey Cannon's March column (1), about the creation of the 'new nutrition science' in which I took a part (2,3). I was honoured to be in such company.

Let me take this opportunity to share with readers my latest venture, with Ruth West. First, we are now in discussion with Schumacher College to establish our College for Enlightened Agriculture (with model farm) on their Dartington site in Devon, England (although the farm itself will not be part of the Dartington estate).

We want it of course to be a teaching establishment, to promulgate the ideas of 'enlightened agriculture'. This is farming that is expressly designed to provide everyone with food of the highest quality without wrecking the rest of the world, of course without cruelty and with the broad aim of creating a more convivial world, fit for human beings and for other species.

We hope to get our first short course up and running later this year; longer courses in 2014; and a full-blown postgraduate course (or equivalent) in 2015. At least equally to the point: we are interpreting 'college' in its proper sense: not just a place to dispense ideas but a forum to develop ideas, in the manner of the Santa Fe Institute (http://www.santafe.edu/).

The concept of enlightened agriculture of course must embrace nutrition (or at least the two must overlap in the manner of a Venn diagram). We hope very much therefore that the new college will develop a synergistic relationship with the authors of *The Giessen Declaration* and of the whole idea of *The New Nutrition.*

Very much in line with the ideas on spirals, systems approaches and non-linear relationships, and the need for a general shift in world-view, expressed in Geoffrey Cannon's column, my own new book *Why Genes are not Selfish and People are Nice*, has just been been published, by Floris. Basically it says that *all* the big ideas that now dominate the world are at least deeply suspect, and that the only way forward is for people at large, Ordinary Joes, to take matters into their (our) own hands.

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Editor's note. Tony McMichael and Colin Tudge both participated in the workshop convened by Claus Leitzmann whose key product is The Giessen Declaration, and both played key parts in the process, in emphasising the central role of the environment in world nutrition.

Global burden of disease
How to assess world health



Symbol for the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, whose gigantic study on the global burden of disease was launched at London's Royal Society

From Barbara Burlingame, Rome, Italy

Thanks to Philip James for his very important analysis of the recently published studies on the global burden of disease (1-3). He has done something that many of us wanted to do, if only we had the time. We at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization are extremely grateful. We will find the data presented here very useful.

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Editor's comment. Philip James's column ended by saying: 'It remains unclear how the results of any gargantuan study of the type produced by [the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation], however awesome, can be a useful basis for policies and actions that could improve public health… Its approach overlooks social and economic determinants of health and disease. Thus, poverty is a major basic driver of many of the identified risk factors, and itself needs to be faced and addressed…

'Huge claims are being made, based on the evidence as accumulated and organised by the colossal and powerful IHME study. My conclusion, and that of others, is that caution is needed. Decades of careful analyses by WHO should not be discarded. All forms of evidence need to be taken into consideration in careful evaluations of the role of dietary patterns and food and nutrition'.

How to respond

Please address letters for publication to wn.letters@gmail.com. Letters should usually respond to or comment on contributions to *World Nutrition*. More general letters will also be considered. Usual length for main text of letters is between 100 and 850 words. Any references should usually be limited to up to 12. Letters are edited for length and style, may also be developed, and once edited are sent to the author for approval.