Editorial

Welcome to the third issue of *Food Chain*. For the first time we have a themed issue on the subject of private standards in food production and processing, and I am grateful to the authors for the high quality of the papers presented, and to Andy Graffham of the Natural Resources Institute, UK, for co-ordinating this themed edition. As Jerry Cooper and Andy Graffham explain in their article, private standards are those that are developed by organizations to address specific issues that are of concern to them. These may include, for example, standards for food production, of which GLOBALGAP is widely used, standards for food quality and safety, or others that address social or environmental issues. The standards may be developed by NGOs and others involved in Fairtrade, or by individual processing or retailing companies. In general, private standards exceed international public standards, such as those developed by the World Trade Organization (WTO), Codex Alimentarius Commission or the European Union. Compliance with private standards is a trade requirement rather than mandatory and suppliers are not required by law to meet them, but as Diego Naziri and Ben Bennett point out in their article 'the choice of whether or not to comply with a private standard becomes a choice between compliance or exit from the market'.

We start off with the Crossfire debate between Peter Lunenborg and Ulrich Hoffmann, which explores the statement that 'Private standards are a barrier to trade that exclude small-scale producers in the developing world'. In their paper, Jerry Cooper and Andy Graffham review the implementation of GLOBALGAP standards by smallholder farmers in Africa, and the costs and benefits of compliance. They note that thousands of small-scale farmers have obtained GLOBALGAP certification, often with support from aid programmes of international organizations, and these farmers successfully export fruits and vegetables to Europe. Dealing with the complexity of the standards and the investment costs needed to achieve and maintain certification, however, is difficult for many growers. They report developments in GLOBALGAP that allow individual countries to adapt the standards to their particular situations through National Technical Working Groups. These are expected to assist compliance by smallholder farmers, and there are also plans to form an international federation of working groups to increase the level of influence by producers over GLOBALGAP.

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Jeremy Haggar and four colleagues from Nicaragua and Costa Rica report on the costs and benefits of certification for coffee producers. They examined different certification schemes by environmental groups such as Rainforest Alliance and standards developed by commercial companies such as Starbucks. As with African smallholders, they also noted that Nicaraguan producer organizations require substantial external financial and technical assistance to gain certification, but for many groups there were greater economic benefits and improved practices that led to higher levels of environmental protection. They conclude that different certification schemes are suitable for different socio-economic groups of coffee producers, depending on their capacity to invest in a scheme.

Valerie Nelson and Adrienne Martin present a review of studies on the impact of Fairtrade standards and the different dimensions of impact, such as economic benefits, livelihoods and quality of life, and environmental impacts. They note that organizations and donors that support Fairtrade standards are keen to establish solid evidence as to whether standards are an effective approach for development, in order to act on the findings and improve their impact. The organizations are also under increasing pressure from consumers and journalists to demonstrate the impact. The authors identify areas where information is missing or inconsistently presented, and outline five factors that shape impact. Unsurprisingly, given the multi-dimensional nature of rural poverty and the complexities of development interventions, they conclude that different Fairtrade schemes and standards bring benefits in some areas, whereas other impacts are less positive or are yet to be quantified. They call for a better understanding of impact based on the perspectives of farmers and other workers in Fairtrade schemes.

Diego Naziri and Ben Bennett report on the implications of private standards for livestock producers and meat exporters. They also distinguish between quality standards developed by large retail or processing companies for supply-chain management, and environmental or animal welfare standards developed by NGOs to reward sustainable or ethical practices. In contrast to fruit and vegetable exports, however, in which retailers share generic private standards, many retailers sell imported meat as 'own label' and they have each developed different standards as a marketing tool to facilitate product differentiation and to meet different consumer requirements. The authors report on a survey in which most developed countries support the introduction of meat standards whereas most developing countries believe the standards create problems. As in other product sectors, it is the large-scale livestock producers in developing countries that are able to make the investment needed to comply with private standards, and the authors describe the example of MeatCo in

Namibia. In contrast to other sectors, however, there may be opportunities for pastoralists to partially meet organic or low-carbon emission standards because their livestock graze natural pastures, but at present it is difficult for these producers to qualify for, or afford, certification. The authors conclude that, despite the benefits, private standards are likely to exacerbate the consolidation and concentration of meat production by large-scale producers and further widen the gap with small-scale livestock keepers.

Hanneke Lam and colleagues report on the impact of WTO sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) on the agri-food trade, with a case study of problems caused by the invasive fruit fly in Kenya, which have led to a ban on avocado exports to South Africa. The case study illustrates the importance of a supportive infrastructure to implement SPS control measures. This involved consultative meetings between the fruit industry and government agencies to develop an action plan for dealing with the problem, training sessions for both the public and private sector, and surveillance studies of the fruit fly supported by the industry. This resulted in an early warning system being set up, an integrated pest management approach, and cooperation between stakeholders to increase awareness of the importance of SPS measures.

There are two field reports in this issue: first Pervaiz Akhtar and colleagues in Pakistan, New Zealand, and the UK examine who the chain coordinators are in dairy, meat, and fruit and vegetable supply chains. Using in-depth interviews, they determine the qualities and characteristics of successful supply-chain coordinators and the resources needed to manage chains. They identify the similarities and differences between coordinators in Pakistan and those in the UK and New Zealand. They conclude that successful coordinators have the skills, knowledge, and education to communicate and manage relationships between chain players, resolve conflicts, coordinate supply and demand of products, and meet quality standards.

Secondly, J.M. Kindossi and colleagues in Benin, together with researchers from South Africa and France, investigated the production of a West African fish condiment named Lanhouin. In a wide-ranging survey of Beninois producers, traders and consumers, they show how most production takes place at a small scale, by women who are illiterate and use knowledge handed down to them. They identify the factors that influence the quality of the product and report the preferences of consumers for specific quality attributes. These findings may be used to re-engineer Lanhouin production to improve its quality.

The technical report in this issue is the first of a series of articles on the decisions that face small-scale processors when starting a new business or when expanding to a larger building. The article focuses on the factors that should be taken into account when selecting the

correct location for a food factory. Subsequent articles will examine the design and layout of food production units and the materials that are needed to construct food-processing buildings and equipment.

My thanks to Richard Beyer for his review of *Food Chain Integrity: A Holistic Approach to Food Traceability, Safety, Quality, and Authenticity,* and finally I have included a selection of the food-related conferences and meetings that will take place worldwide over the next six months. I hope that you find this themed issue interesting and useful and I look forward to receiving your comments. Please also let me have your articles for future issues and show this copy of Food Chain to your co-workers or send them the link to www.practicalactionpublishing.org/food chain to take out a subscription.

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