
Financial contribution to research projects

Working together for a better food supply

Zurich, 27 March 2013. **ETH Zurich has received CHF 5 million from the Coop Sustainability Fund to undertake research projects in the field of sustainable food production over the next several years. The first projects are now underway as part of the ETH World Food System initiative.**

Shelves filled every day with high-quality and sustainably produced food – this is not simply a matter of course. Coop has not only positioned itself as a supplier of sustainably produced food, it is also committed to finding new solutions in the field of resource-efficient food production through the Coop Sustainability Fund. By making a financial contribution to the ETH Zurich Foundation, Coop supports ETH Zurich and the members of the World Food System Center (WFSC). “Coop takes great interest in supporting research that benefits customers directly,” says Sibyl Anwander, Head of Sustainability & Economic Policy at Coop.

Inspiration from practical experience

Researchers and specialists from the retail sector and food industry discuss potential research topics in annual workshops. Project proposals are then submitted to the World Food System Center, an ETH centre of competence. A panel at ETH Zurich selects projects based on scientific criteria as well as their practical relevance. “On the one hand, this type of cooperation provides our researchers with a major practical impetus. On the other, our partners get to be part of an entire network of scientific expertise,” says Roland Siegwart, ETH Vice President for Research and Corporate Relations.

Long-lost crops and dual-purpose chickens

The panel has now selected the first four projects, each of which will receive around CHF 250,000 over the course of two to three years. One project is devoted to a crop that has disappeared almost entirely: buckwheat. Buckwheat is part of the Polygonaceae family and is not related to other crops such as wheat, corn or rice. This makes it particularly interesting from the perspective of food security and biodiversity. It is also gluten-free, which is a big plus for allergy sufferers with celiac disease. Today, buckwheat only plays a minor role in agriculture, mainly because its grains ripen unevenly and there are large losses associated with harvesting. One objective of the new research project is therefore to cultivate varieties that mature as synchronously as possible.

Another research project explores the question of how to exploit the entire life cycle of chickens. Today, egg and meat production are almost completely separate. If, in the future, the same breed of chicken could be used for both purposes, many questions concerning animal welfare and food security could be

addressed. The research project examines, for example, whether these kinds of animals can be fed byproducts from the food industry instead of foods that are also suitable for human consumption. This could potentially be a deciding factor when it comes to sustainable chicken production. The researchers will also conduct social science surveys to study consumers' perception and level of acceptance of such breeds.

“The innovation and research network of the World Food System Center at ETH is helping us at Coop to find solutions to problems along the entire food value chain,” says Anwander.

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World Food System Center

The World Food System Center (WFSC) was founded at ETH Zurich in 2011. The centre of competence brings together 34 professors from six departments. The World Food System Center at ETH Zurich has taken on the task of finding solutions for the entire food/value-added chain, thereby contributing to sustainable food security. The Center fosters interdisciplinary approaches and promotes cooperation between global and local stakeholders. <http://www.worldfoodsystem.ethz.ch/>

Coop is the largest retail and wholesale company in Switzerland. Coop Group operates store formats in the food, non-food and service sectors. Coop offers the greatest choice of brands in Switzerland and has a broad range of environmentally friendly and socially responsible products, as well as sustainability achievements along the entire value chain. With the full takeover of the Transgourmet Group in 2011, Coop increased its domestic and international commitment in the catering and wholesale supplies business. In total, the Coop Group has over 2,000 retail outlets in Switzerland and over 110 cash & carry markets in Switzerland and Europe. The Coop Group has a workplace of approximately 75,000, with 51,300 in Switzerland.

www.coop.ch

ETH Zurich is one of the leading international universities for technology and the natural sciences. It is well-known for its excellent education, ground-breaking fundamental research and for implementing its results directly into practice. Founded in 1855, ETH Zurich today has more than 18,000 students from over 110 countries, including 3,900 doctoral students. To researchers, it offers an inspiring working environment, to students, a comprehensive education. Twenty-one Nobel Laureates have studied, taught or conducted research at ETH Zurich, underlining the excellent reputation of the university.

www.ethz.ch/en.html

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