Can “Ethical Traceability” reestablish the producerconsumer relation?

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Publication date:
2009

Citation (APA):
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Traceability as a concept has emerged in modern societies and their markets where production and consumption of food have become increasingly separated. An increasing number of intermediaries like shippers, wholesalers, processors, repackers, brokers, importers and exporters are involved in the processes. All of these factors add to the obscurity of how food is produced, how it is handled and from where it originates. Traceability is about keeping track with the history of the food. Ethical traceability is about keeping track with the ethical aspects of food production practices and the conditions under which the food is produced. It can be used as a verification process of the methods and practices in use in response to consumer concerns. The emergence of ethical traceability as a realisable concept will need to negotiate both modern supply chain complexities and their governance and the web of private sector and public sector endorsed traceability forms in the food system. Realisation of ethical traceability is not just a morally approved step supported by appropriate technology and communication strategies, but is a politically disputed process.

The aim here is to focus on the communication of production practices in the food chain. In this sense, traceability is about visibility, it is about making the production history of food visible to the eyes of the consumers. In this way traceability allows for producers and retailers to establish a more advanced kind of communication with consumers on production practices. This more detailed communication could facilitate an apparent proximity between the urban and the rural.

Keywords: Ethical traceability, reconnection of consumers and producers