FROM CRISIS MANAGEMENT TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE CASE STUDY OF EHI

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Introduction

From the very outset, the EHI Retail Institute had to deal with crisis management. The roots of the EHI go back to 1951 when it was founded by retailers/wholesalers to help solving the distribution disaster in post-war Germany, and since 1957 it faced the challenge to transform ‘Mum and Papa’ service-stores into modern supermarkets. The institute is committed to the idea of Applied Science: its central method is based on the screening of problems along the total supply chain, to create round-tables or focus groups to elicit the reasons for these problems, to structure the input of the operative staff of companies by academic competence, to support solutions by field-studies, to discuss the results first in the workshops of the “round table” and then in public seminars, before, finally, penetrating those ideas via essays of sector-magazines or in special brochures of EHI.

EHI follows the inductive way of case-studies, never the deductive approach to survey academic literature to build some enlargement of theory. Nevertheless, EHI's findings have been quoted often in academic papers as a source of knowledge.

Within this paper, the EHI activities with regard to coping with a food scandal are mirrored. Twenty-five years ago, food-scandals like manipulated wine from Austria or, fifteen years ago, the British Cow Disease (BSE), led in retail to heightened operative crisis-management to limit the slowdown of sales in the specific food-sector affected by the occurring problems. Within the total supply chain the players of each level, from agriculture to processing, packaging, wholesale distribution, logistics, and retail accepted their responsibility only in their respective field of competence rather than taking a supply chain wide perspective. The frame of business-operations was benchmarked only by legal demands or business-success/failure. In cases of misbehaviours punishment followed by government or by bankruptcy.

The EHI food-security-contributions since the first BSE-scandal in 1994 referred to:

aa) Creating in 1994 a round table for the Total Supply Chain of Cows/Beef.

ab) Briefing all stakeholders in 1995 on the new concept/philosophy of "responsibility of the total chain", which obliged every member of the chain to exchange control data with all members of the chain.

ac) Establishing in 1996 Orgainvent (www.orgainvent.de) for the facultative tracing and tracking of cows and beef as a counter-action to the second BSE-scandal. By forming this joint venture with 50 percent shares for the agricultural and processing side and 50 percent shares for retail institutionalized tracing and tracking in this sector in Germany.

ad) Enforcing the facultative system by contracts accepting financial sanctions of a "sanction committee". Based on this pioneering work focussing on a system solution and its dialogue with international partners, the EU, later, formed the obligatory EU-tracking and tracing regulations.

ba) Confronting in 1995/96 the EHI round table for fruit and vegetables with food-security- problems in agriculture.

bb) Transforming the national fruit and vegetable round table to a European one:

EUREPGAP, today GlobalGAP (www.globalgap.org), is a proactive measure to create "Good Agricultural Practice" for European Retail Produce.

bc) Transforming that round table to a non-profit oriented company in its own right.

bd) To penetrate the standards of EUREGAP worldwide to more than 100 countries which is mirrored by the change of the name form EUREPGAP to GlobalGAP.

While the case-studies of Orgainvent and GlobalGAP are very sector specific, EHI is now working on a "roof-brand" for those activities, which are much more complex and interdisciplinary. In 2008, the EHI Retail Institute initiated via its international academic network the European Retail Academy, an environmental virtual portal www.european-retail-academy.org/ERM, to publish in the internet best practice cases of retail in co-operation with its suppliers and to benchmark the activities in an Environmental Flow Chart, which can be used as well for the vertical flow from agriculture up to retail-communication for a live-style of health in sustainability (LOHAS) and horizontally to compare competitors of each level. It is an open and innovative system applying a systematic approach, which is derived from the Orgainvent and GlobalGAP experience. The aim is to place an environmental retail management (ERM-approach) as one potential benchmark to measure Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in retail in the future.

Methodology:

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a description of the way retailers create technical standards in workshops co-ordinated by EHI. This paper also intends to document that the results of the workshop in the specific field of food security, meanwhile, reached a strategic dimension linking the case of a crisis of cows /beef via the proactive activity for fruit and vegetables, finally, to the much bigger and complex topic of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Cross-Company Challenge

While, due to the EAN-barcode for fast moving consumer products, each article can be identified together with its producer since the middle of the 70ies of the last century, agriculture was lacking such systems. Up to the middle of the 90ies, meat, for example, was an anonymous product with no hint to the source of its origin.

When, for the first time in 1994, TV-reports showed pictures from ill cows (British Cow Disease/BSE) and forecasted that thousands of dead consumers might be the result of the consumption of meat from those animals, in Germany, meat-sales declined by 25 to 30 percent. Consumers were afraid that the meat might come from the UK, and German retailers did not know if this could be the case, because the total supply chain of beef could consist of up to 15 companies involved during the birth, slaughtering, cutting and wholesale operations. Each stakeholder kept his source as a secret being afraid of competitors (Pretzel, 1995; Scheper, 1996; Möller, 1996). The EHI Retail Institute in Germany, therefore, created a Round Table as an expert group with all retailers and also with all suppliers from abroad – because EHI did not support an anti-British campaign ("Don't Buy British") (Hallier, 1995a; Hallier, 1995b Hallier, 1996; Hallier, 1997a; Möller, 1995; Bornemann, 1996; Atzberger, 1996).

At first in the Round Table the meat-buyers from the main players like Metro, Rewe, Kaufland, Lidl, Spar, Coop Deutschland, AVA discussed the problem to investigate, if an "EHI-draft" of a label for tracking/tracing could be accepted by all retailers especially under the aspect of different organizational structures (consumer-co-operation, retailer-co-operation, chain-stores, cash and carry). After the approval derived from three meetings, the decision was taken to discuss the "retail demand" for such a label internationally with national and international suppliers of beef. The international marketing organizations were AgrarMarkt/Austria, the Irish Food Board/Ireland, Vlam Belgium, Charoluxe/SOPEXA France, Vertey Vless/Netherlands and Kodbranchens/Denmark.

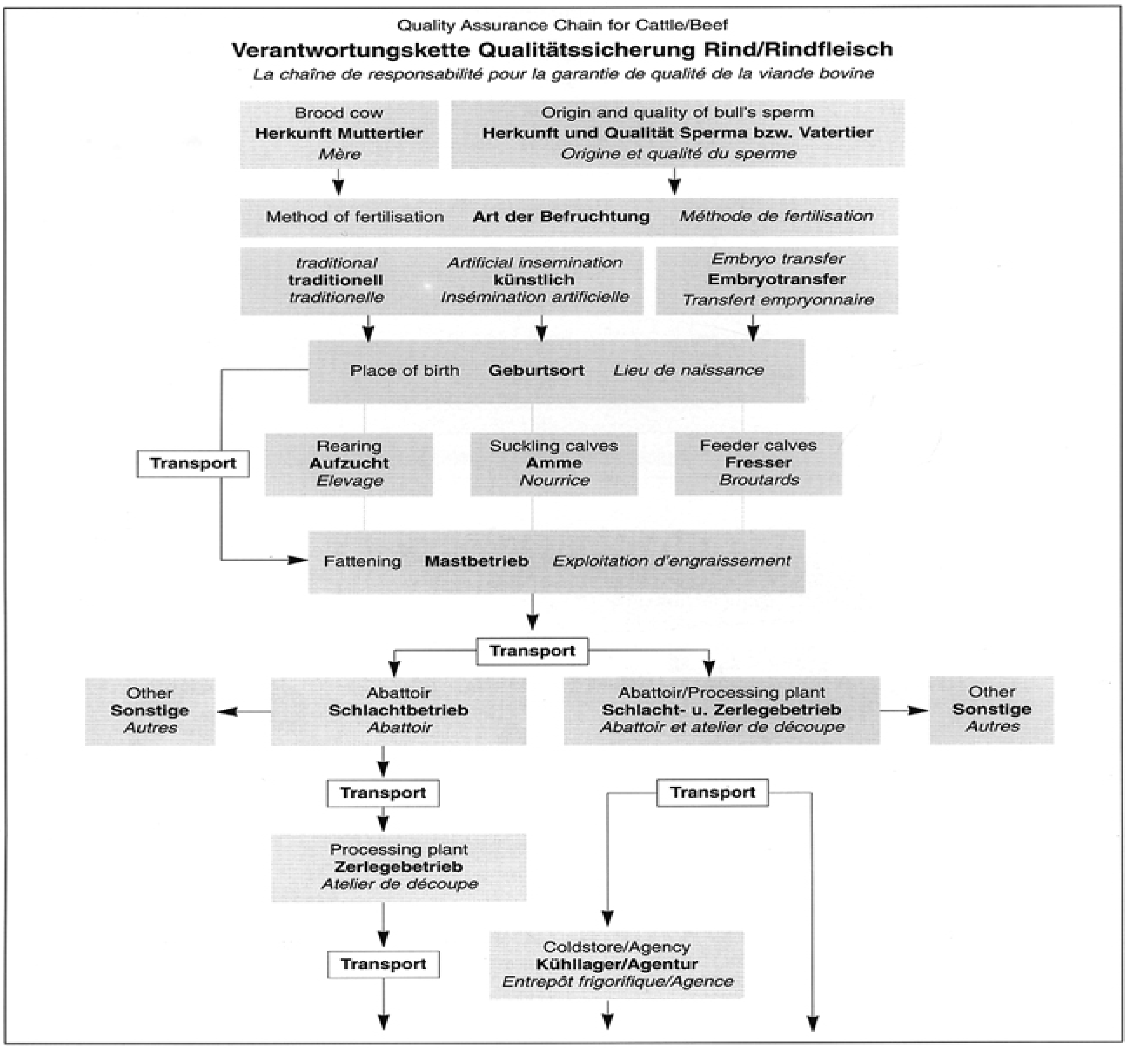
From a strategic viewpoint, it was important to integrate the international market-organizations at an earlier stage. From a tactical perspective, it also put some pressure on the German suppliers who were very reluctant to join the retailers' tracking system for two reasons: first, they perceived a competitive advantage in times were German consumers were afraid to buy BSE-beef and started to campaign "Buy from German farms"; second, foreign suppliers promoted with "Charoluxe" some kind of "branded" products being proud of its origin, while the average German suppliers didn't want to show the retailers the source of supply because they were feared that the German retailers could outplace them and order directly at the source.

Nevertheless, the German suppliers were also afraid that the German retailers could start a campaign for beef-tracking only with examples from abroad – and, therefore, joined the discussion as a third group.

Together with all stakeholders, a flow-chart was developed starting from the 'parents' of the calf through all potential steps of the total supply chain for beef.

Unanimously, retailers and suppliers agreed on the point that the roll-out of the system needed time and that it should start from the back-end: for example, the processing had to assure the day of slaughtering at a fixed dead-line. After a time-limit of another three months the slaughtering had to assure the source of the farms which had been delivering the cattle, another three months later the farms had to prove the place of birth of the cattle. Every three months another step toward transparency had been reached by this continuous procedure.

Figure 1: Quality Assurance Chain for Cattle beef



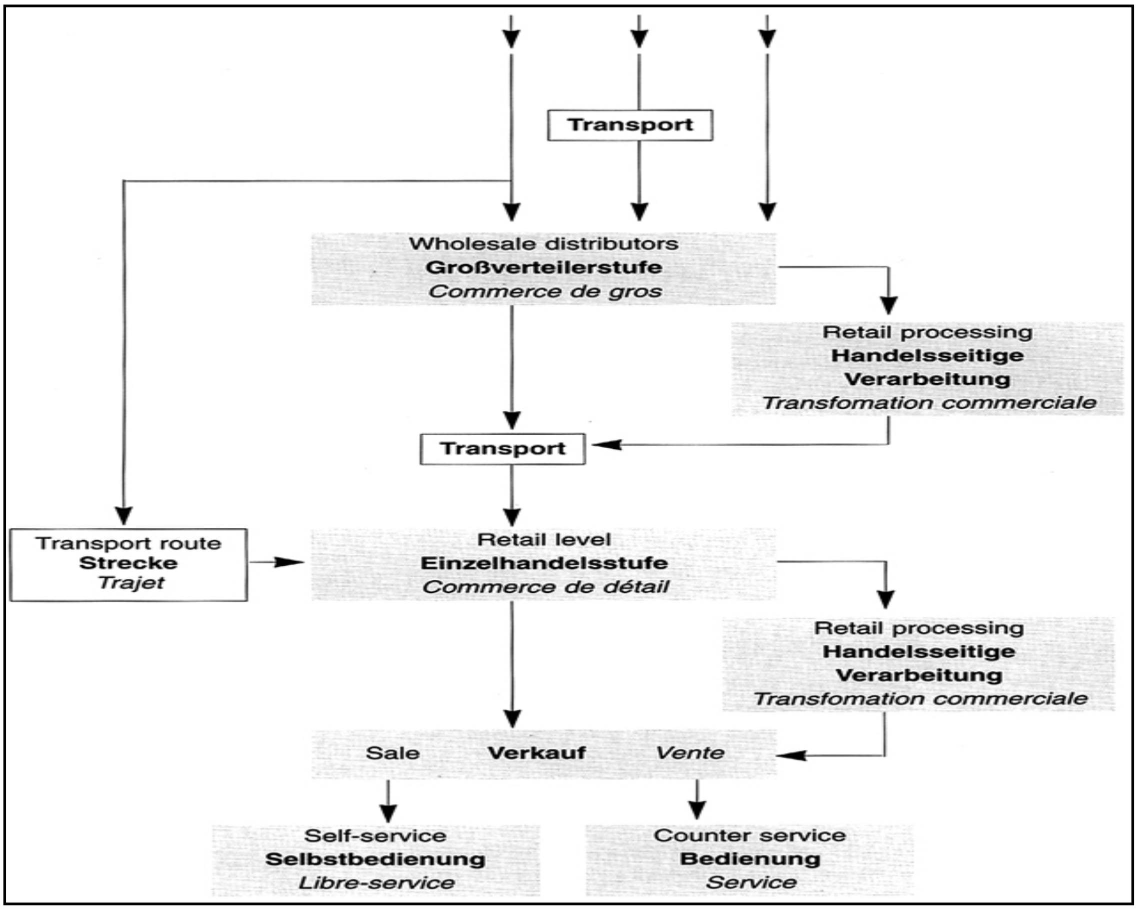
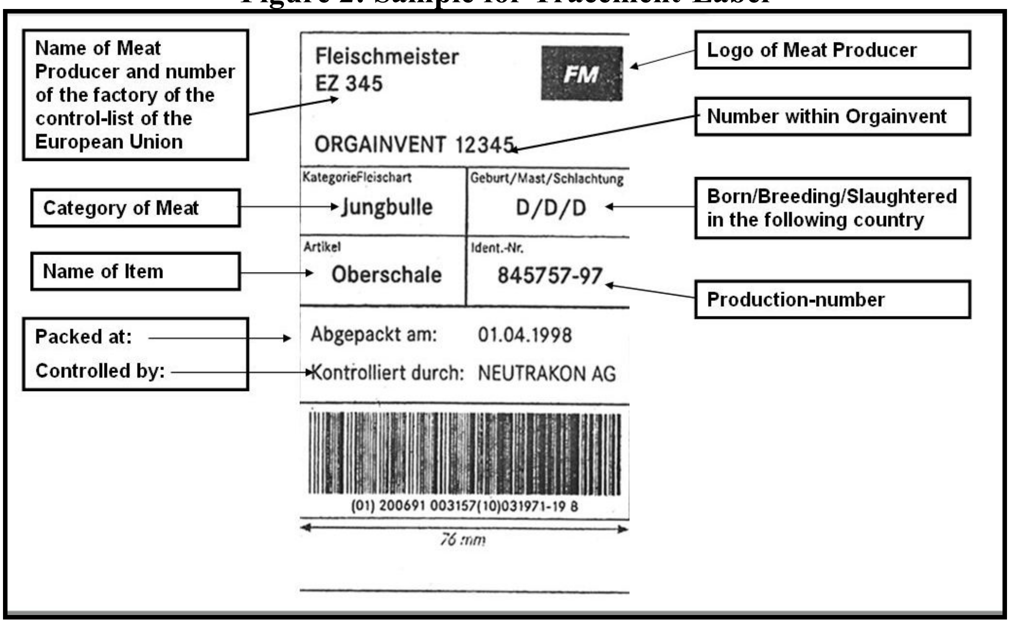


Figure 2: Sample for Tracement-Label



Parallel, the idea of the EHI-label was disseminated by essays in magazines, on seminars and conferences, by interviews in newspapers – also in bilateral talks between retailers with transport-business, producers of feedings and other stakeholders.

On the political side, EHI acted by printing a special brochure about the topic of tracing and tracking. It distributed 560 copies to all members of the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) and 100 copies each to all of the regional participants, involving consumer-organizations in discussions. Due to the national pressure but also initiatives of the French SOPEXA partners, VLAM Belgium and Kodbnrachens Denmark, on the international and EU-level, the German Federal Ministry of agricultural started to ear-mark the cows.

Institutionalized Tracking

In the second wave of the BSE-scandal in 1996 it became apparent that EHI had been accepted as the leading 'think tank', and if the national suppliers could not offer EHI-tracking/tracing as a standard, they would face the danger to be out of business. To calm down mistrust of the farmers in that, via the EHI-Label, there could be a shift of costs from retail to the farms only, EHI started, in 1997, to institutionalize the system in form of a joint venture with the farmers: the company Orgainvent was created (Hallier, 1997b; 1997c; 1997d; Möller, 1997a; 1997b; Juergens, 1997).

The company structure reflected the balance of power between retail and the total supply side of farming and slaughtering/processing. 50 percent of the board was appointed by EHI, 50 percent by the farmers and slaughters and processing-houses; the Managing Director of EHI became the chairman of the Board, the Managing Director of Orgainvent was appointed by the farmers and the German government appointed a deputy minister to the Board.

Within a rather short time period, Orgainvent became responsible for three quarters of the beef-industry in Germany, and, on the level of food-retail, more than two thirds of all the chains participated in the Orgainvent-system. Also, the European Commission reacted: they followed the EHI/Orgainvent systematic approach, stipulated by the EU Regulation 178/2002, demanding within the European Union a complete horizontal tracking and tracing of all cows/beef and feed-products from January 1st 2005 (Hallier, 1998b; Jürgens, 1998; Kempcke, 1998; Lambertz, 1998; Schneehagen, 1999; Roux, 1999).

More and more the daily work changed from crisis-management to nutritional marketing and to gain social competence (Hallier, 2000a; 2000c). Partly, this could be engineered by the activities themselves, but, of course, also by an effective communication strategy. Between 1995 and 2005, EHI Retail Institute published seven special brochures about tracing/tracking and labelling (EHI, 1995; 1997; 2004; 2005). The focus on applied science compared to more traditional academic style of research can be seen in the amount of published articles in special magazines (ranking number 1) and EHI monographs compared to only four articles in readers between 2001 and 2008 (Byrne, in Hallier, 2001, Hallier, 2001, 2008).

Good Agricultural Practice

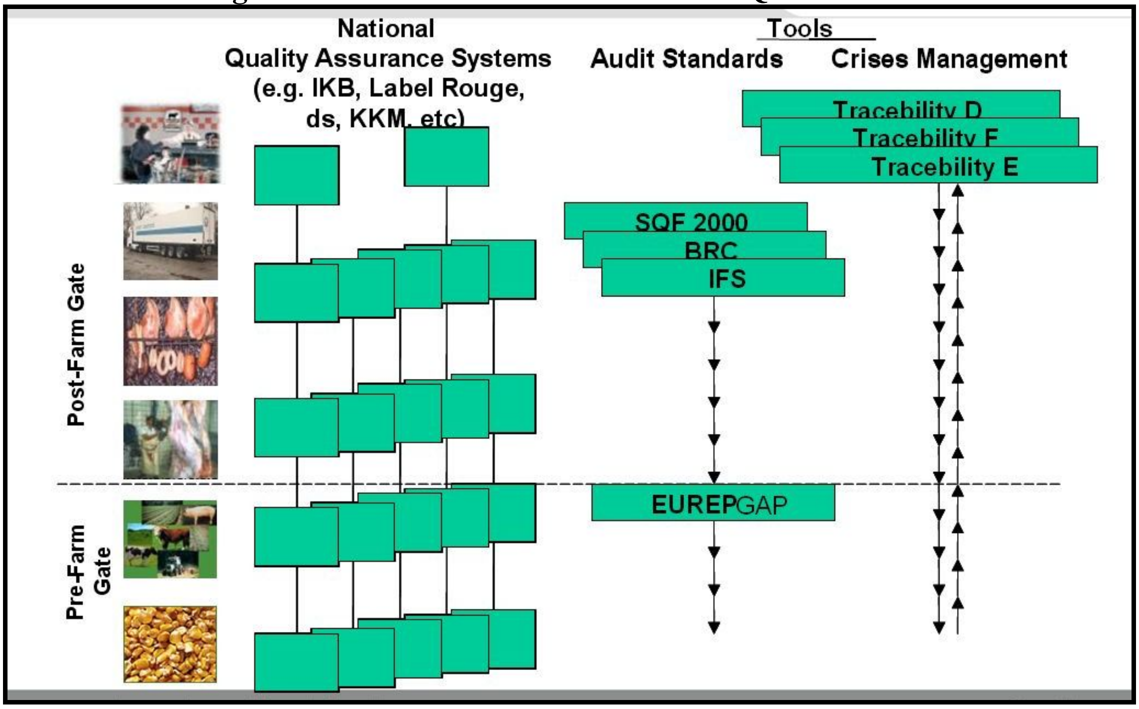
Having become more conscious about the risks at the farm level due to the Mad Cow Disease, EHI started in 1996 a global partnership for safe and sustainable agriculture.

International Challenge

While Orgainvent and the EU-Regulation have been a result of an actual crisis, the EHI-initiative for fruit and vegetable resulted from a proactive initiative.

The second point of difference is that, while in the case of BSE each nation had to react immediately with different approaches having been taken between 1994 and 1996 (the second peak of the crisis), now, in the case of produce there was not such a fact and time-pressure. The EHI Retail Institute could start an international Round Table for "European Retailers Produce Good Agricultural Practice" (EUREPGAP) to discuss and generate the vision of setting farm-assurance standards of a global reach (Möller, 1997b; 1997c; 1998; 1999a). While in retail all the international fruit buying-departments were invited for the first focus-group, the supply-side referred to citrus related products only. The panel even concentrated at first on the two countries of Spain and Italy only. Here, the first tests for citrus-supply base were organized. Only after the successful implementation of a citrus-standard for those two countries, the number was enlarged by further countries and by a wider range of products. At this stage of a widened scope of operations, EHI realized that also other organizations were active in this field. Immediately, the task-force started the dialogue with other quality assurance initiatives including both, the level of Pre-Farm as well as Post-Farm Gate (Möller, 1999b; 2000a; 2000b). EUREPGAP decided not to compete with the other standards but to limit itself to the Pre-Farm Gate level as here EUREPGAP could gain its unique competitive position supporting also all activities of quality assurance initiatives at the Post-Farm Gate level. The interaction between the different QA initiatives had been visualised on a chart of Jürgen Matern, Metro, Germany during an EurepGAP-workshop, which is still used in many seminars (figure 3).

Figure 3: Interaction between different QA Initiatives



To be able to finance a control-system, worldwide synergy effects were taken into account. From the demand-size not only European retailers but also companies from Asia or the USA joined. Due to that fact "EUREPGAP" was re-labled to "GlobalGAP"(see Figure 4).

Institutionalized Drivers

Similar to the approach applied when establishing Orgainvent, also in the case of the Good Agricultural Practice, the EHI Retail Institute a spin off of this workshop took place creating an independent company with the name of "FoodPlus" to give stakeholders from around the world the possibility to contribute and to share the impact onto the standards for fruit and vegetables democratically.

Differently to the strategy and tactical steps of crisis-management in the meat-industry, the pro-active activities of the fruit and vegetable EHI/GlobalGAP-team refer mainly to back-stage operations. No necessity was perceived to go public.

Figure 4: National Technical Working Groups GlobalGAP

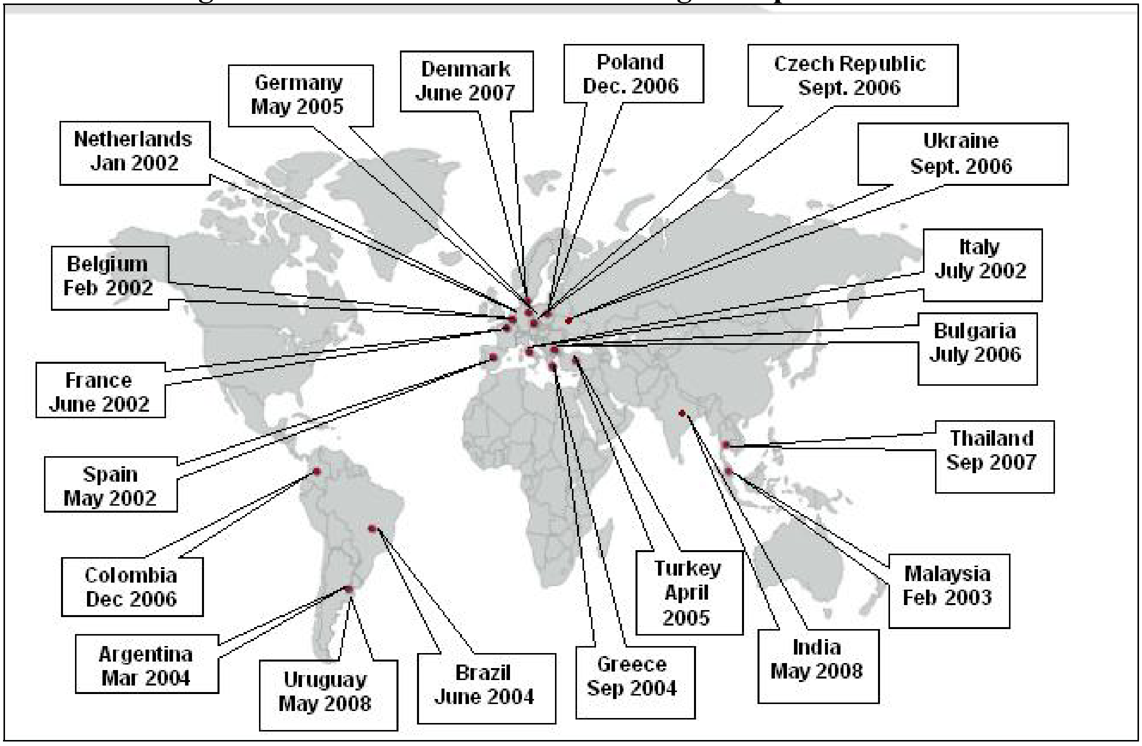
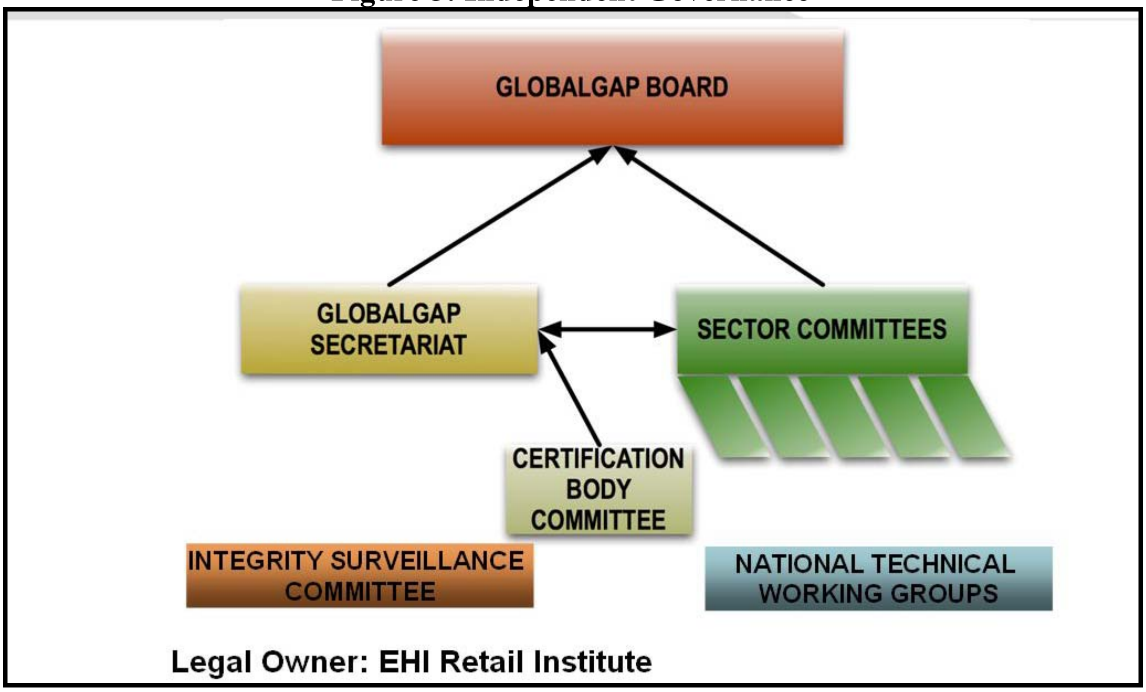


Figure 5: Independent Governance



Environmental Retail Management

Having been involved via Orgainvent and FoodPlus in many conferences about "Green Marketing" in the beginning of this century, it suddenly became clear that due to the danger of the change of the world climate many EHI-pilot-activities, for example, from the 80ies like "optimizing packaging" now became "main-stream" thinking.

A virtual Network

Environmental aspects are too complex to be handled by one institute only even when acting as a co-ordinator. Furthermore, in many facets of this topic, like CO2-

footprint or others, specialists have a higher reputation and budget at their disposal compared to the EHI. However, EHI was successful in positioning itself as a worldwide catalyst "for retail innovation" again. But also here again it is not yet clear how "environmental action" can be defined or measured and how far action A perhaps counteracts action B. For example: organic beef is claimed to be more environmental – but it needs additional space (up to 50 percent) for breeding. Another point of discussion would be action C (beef from Argentina) versus action D (for example beef locally sourced in Europe). There are pro and con from lots of controversial stakeholders – as well on the level of agriculture, on the level of processing, on the level of packaging, as on the level of logistics. Even many a definition claiming what is sustainable or what is environmental are not yet agreed on. Therefore, organizationally not a company, but a virtual network open for discussion for everybody was created to help to increase transparency about actions taken and to build bridges to interdisciplinary aspects.

Benchmark Flow Chart

To be able to monitor and to cluster activities of the Total Supply Chain, similarly to the flow-chart of tracking/tracing cows and beef, components like agriculture, processing, packaging, transport, depots/outlets, in-store technologies, or promotions were listed and published in a newly created Homepage www.european-retail-academy.org/ERM.

Having applied the method of a quantitative descriptive survey, a questionnaire was sent out first to 20 retailers with the demand to fill in that chart estimating in how far their total efforts for the environment (100 percent) could be split into the separate steps of the flow-chart. The first six returns were then again published on that Homepage. The publication of the results (without disclosing the companies) is one way to create awareness. Companies see the estimates from competitors and compare it with their own efforts. By this, reflection and the unlocking of creativity could be stimulated.

Figure 6: Environmental Flow Chart

Level	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agriculture	30	-	25	5	17	-
Processing/Packaging	20	25	10	15	13	-
Building (depots/outlets)	10	-	15	35	20	50
Shop fitting/processing	20	-	15	5	21	40
POS/Advertising	10	25	20	5	16	5
Consumer Lifestyle	10	50	15	35	13	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The intention is to enlarge the panel and to repeat the questions over the time period of several years. Readers of this paper are explicitly called and invited to participate in this survey. The first result of the awareness creating activity was a Round Table of EHI Retail Institute for energy saving measures to build retail outlets. EHI decided to speed-up the process by annual awards.

Corporate Social Responsibility

While tracing/tracking as well as good agricultural practice should be seen as the very basics of food-security and, therefore, remain out of the field of competition among retailers or wholesalers, the more complex Environmental Retail Management provides a strategic and tactical scope to look for best practices under a different focus. There might be communities created on bio-/organic food, others on fair-trade, some of regional sourcing and others of global sourcing reflecting different thinking of the consumers.

All could be measured/benchmarked by comparing the underlying philosophy with operative activities. The keyword is "Corporate Social Responsibility".

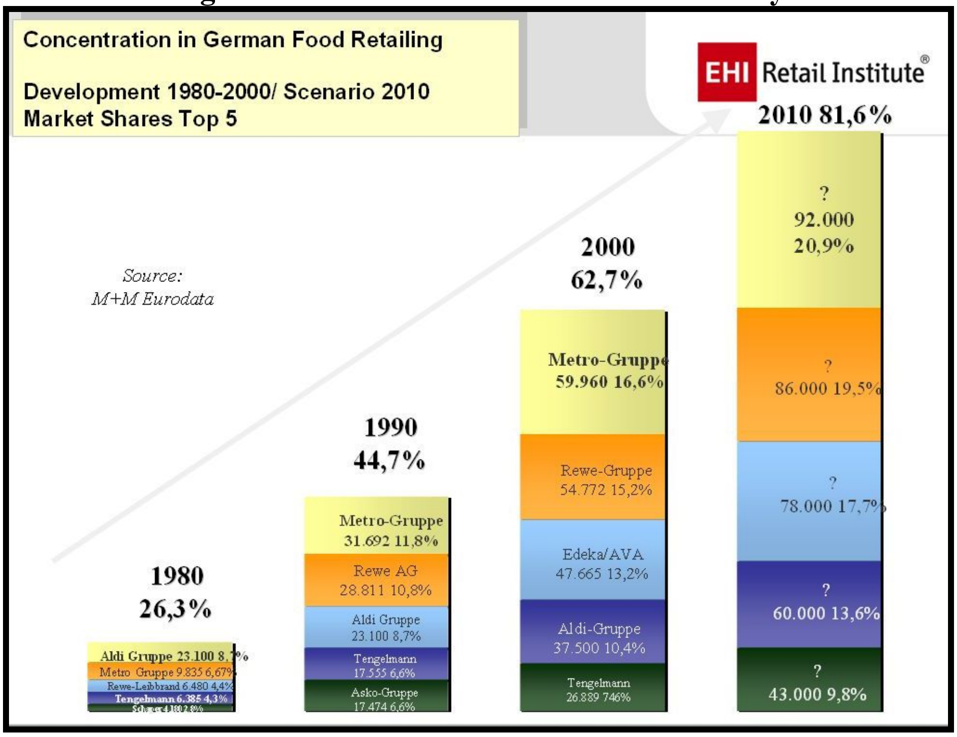
There are at least three factors which have led to the situation of higher levels of awareness for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

- The society is changing. Environment becomes a globally accepted topic.
- The sourcing of products has changed from local/regional partners to global partners.
- The size and professionalism of retail has changed.

The retailers, due to the size of their top-ranking players, their technology and the globalization of the big companies are able to be the driver for international standards from a technical and ethical viewpoint watched by the society which keeps an eye on the Corporate Social Responsibility of the big players.

Taken the size of retail-companies, the concentration within Western Europe but also in the US and Asia has reached tremendous dimensions. In Germany, for example, the Top 5 players in 1980 had an aggregate market-share of 26.3 percent. In the year 2010 this market share had risen to over 80 percent.

Figure 7: Market Concentration in Germany



To understand the retail business, one might compare the annual turnover of the US retailer WalMart with the GNP of Switzerland. They are both of the same size but WalMart's turnover is growing quicker than the GNP of Switzerland. In the last years, top globalizing retailers had achieved double-digit-growth rates (Figure 8).

Partly, this market domination derives from the power of technology used by the big players.

The increase of power of retail in relations to the suppliers can be seen by the chart "Power Chess-Board" (Hallier., 1995b; 1998a; 1999; Westerman, 1997) (Figure 9).

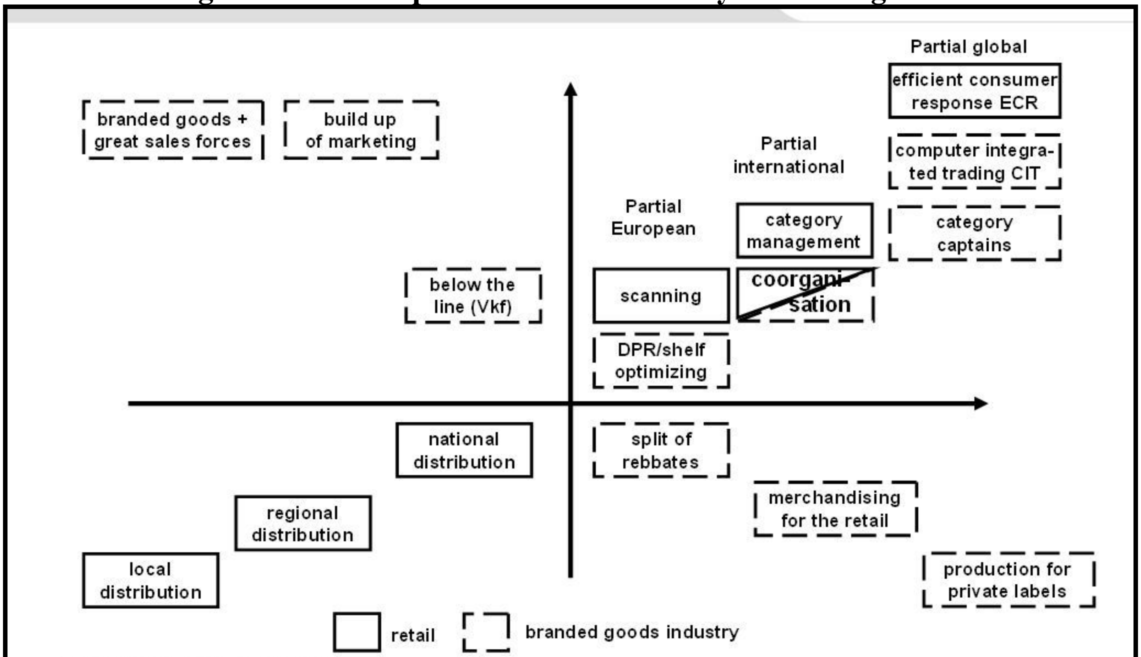
On the time-axis (t) in the 50ies /60ies of the 20th century, the branded goods industry was dominating the atomistic retail. In the 80ies, due to the increasing size of the demand side and the concentration of retail and national penetration or even internationalization, retailers reversed the trend and became the "rule-setters". This trend was enhanced by the fall of the 'Iron Curtain', which supported the growth of the

Figure 8: Growth rate (percentage) from 2003-2004)

Company	Growth	Stores	Turnover Netto US Dollar in billion in 2004
Auchan (France)	+37,5 %	2. 835	44,7
Coles Myer (Australia)	+32,4%	2. 683	23,7
Aeon (Japan)	+28,5%	9. 956	38,8
Metro (Germany)	+15,7%	2. 562	70,1
Walgreens (USA)	+15,7%	4. 585	37,6
CVS (USA)	+15,0%	743	30,6
Kaufland/Lidl (Germany)	+14,8%	6. 627	42,6
REWE (Germany)	+14,4%	13. 433	50,7
Tesco (UK)	+13,5%	2. 391	62,2
Carrefour (France)	+13,2%	11. 080	90,3

Source: Hallier/EHI/ Top 25 Retailers of the World

Figure 9: The Empowerment of Retail by Marketing-Tools



Source: Prof. Dr. B. Hallier/EHI

top retail players in the West which, in addition, acted as a technical driving force for the East (Huppert, 1997). An indicator for the power of international retailers penetrating the Eastern markets is the fact, that in Poland ten years after the reunification of Eastern and Western Europe, there was no longer a Polish retailer in the Top Ten Food Chains (figure 10).

Relating to the former socialist territories still being in transition, Western Corporate Social Responsibility activities are suggested to facilitate political and monetary participation of the Eastern partners in the wealth creation in these countries (Hallier, 2000b).

Figure 10: Top Poland Retailers 2000

Rank	Company	Number of Stores	Turnover 2000 in Mio. €
1	Metro (D)	65	2,512
2	Jeronimo Martins (P)	735	963
3	Casino (F)	33	614
4	Carrefour (F)	52	611
5	Rewe (D)	40	572
6	Dohle (D)	13	461
7	Tengelmann (D)	131	455
8	Ahold (NL)	149	441
9	Auchan (F)	24	418
10	Tesco (GB)	40	394

Conclusion

This pragmatic case study portrayed the activities and contributions of EHI to retail innovation from 1951 until today. The case study reflects that timely and proactive entrepreneurial answers to urgent societal and environmental problems, for example, food security and quality triggered by global animal deseases, can make a significant change. It shows, for example, to business students how entrepreneurial spirit and visions can, finally, materialize in a variety of business ventures ranging from company creations, spin offs to networks. The case study also reflects a gradual development from national to international engagement increasingly integrating international partner organizations and synergizing their diverse contributions. It calls for systems and cluster thinking of the overall global supply chain which could be seen as a precondition that intiatives on a business level can even ignite political decision makers on a European level. Relating to the strategy of Corporate Social Responsibility, the author appeals to participate in a global survey which documents the various contributions of retailers to the environment. Due to their increasing market power and influence, especially, large retailers might be able to give a most valuable contribution in this respect. Pointing to developments in Eastern Europe these Corporate Social Responsibility should also be driven by the intention to contribute to increased levels of wealth and living standards of Eastern European consumers.

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