

BIOSAFETY LIABILITY & REDRESS CONSUMERS' VIEWPOINT

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Biotechnology and Consumers
- Overview of Biosafety Protocol
- Suggestions for Liability & Redress Mechanism

Introduction

- Consumers' rights include:-
 - the right to safety;
 - the right to information;
 - the right to choose;
 - the right to redress
 - the right to a health environment

Introduction cont...

- These rights are prescribed in a number of documents including:-
 - the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection
 - national Constitutions

Intro. Conti ...

consumer rights apply for all products and services and to all consumers!

Consumers & Biotech

- Major consumer concerns on biotech are:-
 - Food Safety Issues
 - Environmental Issues
 - Ethical Issues

Food Safety Issues

include:-

- nutritional changes or increased toxins
- allergies
- antibiotic resistance

Environmental Issues

include:-

- super-weed;
- super-bugs;
- more pesticide use;
- less biodiversity;
- damage to organic farming.

Ethical Issues

include:-

- concerns over human gene;
- labeling for choice

Food Safety Issues

- Suggested elements in safety of GM Foods

...all genetically modified food and animal feed should be subjected to a mandatory pre-market examination by the appropriate regulatory authorities and approved for sale only after they have been proved to be fit for consumption

Food Safety Cont..

individuals charged with the responsibility for risk assessment should be well qualified to make decisions in the area under review, be individuals of high integrity, and meet stringent requirements for public disclosure of actual and potential conflicts of interest

Food Safety Cont..

... the concept of substantial equivalence be improved by the development and application of new techniques which can help to identify unintended and potentially harmful changes.

risk/benefit considerations should not be introduced until the basic threshold of reasonable certainty of no harm to human health has been reached

Food Safety Cont..

governments should develop and implement processes and mechanisms that will make it possible to trace all foods derived from biotechnology, containing novel ingredients or claiming novel benefits

there should be a periodic review of the field by specialists and stakeholders who are responsible for the regulatory process and also mechanisms must be put in place to discuss any issues that may arise at the earliest opportunity

Food Safety Cont..

when substantive uncertainties prevent accurate risk assessment, governments should act protectively on the side of safety and

there should be elaborate rules and procedure in the field of liability and redress.

Food Safety Conti..

Efforts already made include:-

- expert consultations by WHO and FAO
- Guidelines and Principles developed by Codex
- Mega Study on Biotech undertaken by WHO
- OECD
- WB initiatives ...

Overview of Biosafety Protocol

- the Protocol leaves open the very important question as to how it relates to the WTO and other environmental agreements
- coverage of GM products under the Protocol is limited
- labeling provisions inadequate

Overview cont...

- Precautionary principle included
- Principle of AIA
- Liability rules to be included

Suggestions for Liability & Redress Mechanism

- comprehensive and rigorous system for ensuring the satisfaction of the public, animal and environment welfare
- comprehensive and factual information
- liability borne by the nearest originator
- easily, accessible and consumer friendly processes
- long-term liability

Parting Shot

‘Evolution is unpredictablebut when we start messing up with life, life is likely to fight back.’

Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics and specialist on genetics and evolution, University College, London.

Thank You All

