

**EU AND US ARGUMENTS REGARDING  
ENVIRONMENTAL & HUMAN HEALTH RISKS  
ASSOCIATED WITH GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS**

WORKSHOP FOLLOWING THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CONGRESS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD &  
ETHICS AT THE ROYAL VETERINARY AND AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, COPENHAGEN DENMARK

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**Agenda**

The workshop opened with personal introductions and plenary discussion. Two reports on current research and outreach efforts were presented, and attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions about the reports. Participants divided into groups for the first workgroup session and discussed research and outreach needs. A break followed, during which the secretary and reporter for each group prepared their group's report for plenary. Everyone reconvened and each group reported, allowing questions and discussion after the reports. After lunch, two more reports were given on current research and outreach efforts. Next, participants talked about how these efforts relate to human health and environmental risk. This was followed by the second workgroup session on developing a preliminary outline for a coordinated research and outreach effort. The groups presented their outlines and discussed possible research designs. A discussion and summary of the day's events followed, and the workshop was adjourned.

## **Reports**

Jesper Lassen (Aalborg University Department for Development and Planning) reported on *European Perceptions of Food Biotechnology as Indicated by Eurobarometer Findings*. Lori P. Knowles (the Hastings Center) then reported on *The Hastings Center's Project on Public Perceptions of Agricultural Biotechnology*. During the afternoon session, Frans Brom (Utrecht University Centre for Bioethics and Health Law) reported on *The Transatlantic Platform for Consumer Concerns and International Trade*. Sigrid Sterckx (Ghent University Department of Philosophy and Moral Science) reported on *Ethical Dilemmas Posed by Questions of Intellectual Property*.

## **Workgroup Sessions**

The morning workgroup sessions focused on identifying research and outreach needs to facilitate international cooperation and policy-making. Participants divided into two groups and assigned a reporter, secretary, and timekeeper for each group. People worked in pairs to identify research questions, informational needs and outreach needs. When the lists were complete, group members discussed their lists. The groups then selected a research question and determined the most relevant informational and outreach needs.

During the afternoon workgroup sessions, participants worked toward preliminary outlines for coordinated research and outreach efforts. After attempting to refine the research questions asked during the morning session, groups attempted to determine which information needs were most relevant, and

to identify both outreach activities and research questions that were important to current policy-making dilemmas.

### **Preliminary Questions for Research and Outreach Efforts**

Participants agreed that there was a pervasive need to develop a better understanding of the various ethical and moral issues that result from different cultural/political/historical backgrounds. Questions associated with this concern included:

What do people think/feel/perceive and why do they do so?

How can we create a sphere for consideration of different cultural and ethical views at all levels ranging from the local to the international policy making level?

How do we connect local, regional and international issues of culture? What do we gain by doing so?

Participants discussed the need to understand the concept of trust, how it functions generally, and specific concerns associated with food biotechnology.

Questions associated with this concern included:

- How do issues of trust, accountability and ownership affect people's perceptions of biotechnology generally?
- Are there specific issues of trust associated with genetically modified foods?
- How does uncertainty relate to trust? Is it possible to model uncertainty in a way that helps the public understand it better?
- What strategies and techniques can be used to enhance public trust in the science and technology involved in genetically modified foods?

Participants voiced a concern that more research was needed regarding ethical implications of concepts such as Invention, Novelty, and Industrial Application. Questions associated with this concern included:

- Regarding biological resources, where does ownership reside? Who should control patents? What is the ethical justification for this answer? How can ethics be explicitly taken into account in the patent granting process?
- Should researchers have free access to biological resources? What influence does this decision have on science and its application?
- What are the practical implications of current patent systems?

Participants agreed that various regulation schemes should be investigated. They suggested beginning with the following questions:

- At what level and via what sectors should biotechnology be regulated? What are the local, regional, national, and worldwide implications of this decision?
- What are the appropriate criteria to be used when making decisions about genetically modified foods? How do we decide which criteria are appropriate and which are inappropriate?

Participants concluded that the research questions they had posed would profit by interdisciplinary and international involvement from such disciplines as geneticists, animal scientists, international law experts, legislative bodies, economists, philosophers, religious leaders, etc.

## **Workshop Participants**

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