

Poster Abstract - H.02

EU REGULATION ON TRACEABILITY AND LABELING OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD AND FEED: PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND CITIZENS

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With the aim of perceiving reactions, opinions, attitudes and feelings of the various actors of the agro-food chain involved in the GMO debate, we carried out a qualitative research in the Trento Autonomous Province. UE regulation on traceability and labeling of GM food and feed (1829/2003/CE a 1830/2003CE) was the topic of the analysis. The final goal was providing local institutions with guidelines for managing the policy on food and feed traceability on the basis of the Informed Choice Principle (Reg. 178/2002/EU, art. 8 and 10). Besides, we wanted to assay the suitability of a deliberative democracy approach in the view of an improved public perception analysis. In 2004, two focus groups with selected stakeholders, and two public meetings with citizens were organized. Firstly, we analyzed the position of the stakeholders, i.e. people who work, study or directly deal with agrobiotechnologies. We selected delegates of public institutions, of private and public analysis laboratories, of farmers, breeders and industry associations and trade-unions, and representatives of consumer and environmental associations. Then, we evaluated citizens' perceptions and points of view on GM food and feed consume, and their trust in the institutions. The discussions were organized on the basis of a public debate and a dialogue with experts of the question. A DVD with a short documentary of the happenings was produced. This was presented during a final meeting, and given to the participants as a gift for their cooperation.

Our research confirmed a general non-acceptance of the GMO products. Worth stressing, stakeholders admitted that their choice was based on market motivations, while citizens expressed a concern based on a complex combination of emotional, political, cultural and ethical aspects. Stakeholders showed familiarity with the matter. Citizens, at the opposite, resulted dazed and worried on their own competence in label understanding. Both groups judged the EU regulation on traceability and labeling a promising tool toward an enhanced defense of the consumer's right. Both groups, however, revealed a notable diffidence and doubts on the Authorities' effectiveness in managing the control activity. Stakeholders faced the debate with a *problem solving* approach and expressly focused on the technical questions concerning the proper application of the UE regulation. Conversely, the lay-public tended continuously to diverge the discussion from the principal theme of the debate (UE regulation on food labeling) and to direct it to wide issues concerning the whole humanity (i.e. world famine, biodiversity defense, multinational resources exploitation, long term consequences of GMO spread, etc). Moreover, they showed a strong feeling of *outrage* against the GM technology applications, and a marked need of participation in the decision-making process (Martinelli, 2004, NDA, 3:69-76). Finally, stakeholders and citizens expressed a notable feeling of incommunicability with the scientific community. We believe that a more aware attitude of the scientists on the risk management and communication strategies would empower their role in the public decision-making process on biotechnologies.

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