

The French « High Council for Biotechnologies » : an innovative institution for GMOs assessment

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Workshop on Capacity-building for
research and information exchange on
socio-economic impacts of Living
Modified Organisms under the
Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

14 - 16 November 2011 - New Delhi,
India

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The « High Council for Biotechnologies »

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- Created in 2008
- Specificities of the French context
 - A long lasting, fierce controversy on GMOs
 - A *de facto* moratorium
 - The « Grenelle de l' Environnement »
- An institutional innovation
 - A scientific committee AND
 - An economic, ethical and social committee

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What voice for the HCB ?

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- « Opinions » of the Scientific Committee
- « Recommendations » of the EES Committee
- **Advice to the French Authorities, on any question related to biotechnologies.**
- The political sphere keeps its power of decision.
- No decisional autonomy for science-based institutions (= / = FDA).

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The economic, ethical and social committee :

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- **An original composition :**
 - Professional organisations (agriculture, seed industry, ...);
 - Trade-Unions;
 - Associations and NGOs (environment, consumers, patients, ...);
 - Representatives of the political sphere;
 - Other institutions and agencies.
 - Sociologists, economists, lawyers

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Functioning of the EESC :

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- **Evaluation method :**
 - A case by case analysis,
 - To determine for what reasons and for whom this GMO can be deemed beneficial or detrimental,
 - To replace it within its economic, social, ethical and agronomic context.
- **Writing « recommandations » : identifying stakes, arguments and points of view**
 - =/= Building Consensus
 - =/= Weighing Pros and Cons

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« Recommandations » so far :

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- **On GMOs cultivation:**
 - Maize : Mon810, Bt11, 1507, NK603
 - Potato : Amflora; Sugarbeet : H7-1
 - Soybean : 40-3-2
- **On GMOs importation:**
 - For food and feed : 40-3-2 Soybean
 - For ornamental use : recolored Carnation
- **On experimental field trials :**
 - GM Grapevine (recently destroyed !)

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« Recommendations » so far :

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- **On general legislative frames :**
 - Definition of a « GMO – free » label
 - Information of the public / GMO cultivation
 - Coming soon : modalities of co-existence between GM and non – GM crops
- **On Gene Therapy Trials :**
 - 10 trials evaluated so far

Evaluation frames for all these different types of files are available

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Producing Socio-economic expertise :

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- **To rely on stakeholders to :**
 - Gather all the different points of view,
 - Ask the pertinent questions.
- **To mobilize experts :**
 - From the social sciences
 - From the « field » : professional associations, ...
- **Interactions with the Scientific Committee**

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The Stakes of Socio-economic Evaluation - 1 :

- **To improve the transparency of scientific expertise**
 - Construction of a dialogue between the two committees
 - Scientific expertise is strengthened by the questions and interrogations of the Economic, ethical and social committee

- **To guarantee the « freedom to produce and consume with or without GMOs »**
 - As stated by the 2007 French Law on GMOs
 - The coexistence of GM, conventional, and GM-free productions

The Stakes of Socio-economic Evaluation - 2 :

- **To take into account international developments :**
 - Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Socio-economic considerations

- **To take into account the recent developments at the European level :**
 - Conclusions of the meeting of the European ministries of environment – Dec. 2008