

**Genetic Engineering  
Rice and other Crops  
Consumer Issues: Information and  
Risk Communication**

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**Content:**

- Consumer Issues
- Communication
  - Labeling
  - Stakeholder engagement
- Some Suggestions /Recommendations

## Consumer Issues (Rights)

Universal Rights (UN Consumer Protection Guidelines)

- Rights to safety
- Rights to (basic needs) essential goods and services
- Rights to information
- Rights to choice
- Rights to redress
- Rights to healthy environment
- Rights to consumer education
- Rights to be heard

## Consumer Issues

- Limited knowledge on part of the public.
- One of the major factors leading to controversies with regards to GM crops / food
  - the neglect of the needs, interests and concerns of the primary stakeholders – CONSUMERS!
- The risks of biotechnology,
  - the problems of interfering with nature, evolution and creation, and ethical considerations are of increasing importance in the civil-society debate on the development and introduction of GMOs.

## Consumer Issues

- Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes that nature itself is to be valued for what it is
- **Ownership – Intellectual Property / Patent**
  - Seeds – control of supply / access
- Many survey (example conducted by AFIC, 2008) awareness of biotechnology is low in the surveyed countries –
  - food poisoning, pesticide residue, additives still primary concern.

*Contradiction?*

## Consumer Issues

- Is GM answer to food security issues ????
- More GM food planted in **industrial countries** than developing countries where more people are poor and are vulnerable to disruption in agriculture cycle.
- Will the food make it to the **hands of the malnourished people?**
- Will it enhance lives of **small scale farmers / subsistence farming?**
- Will it really increase yield and secure food supply or just commercial crops – like oil palm, soy and maize?

# Communication

## ■ Communication :

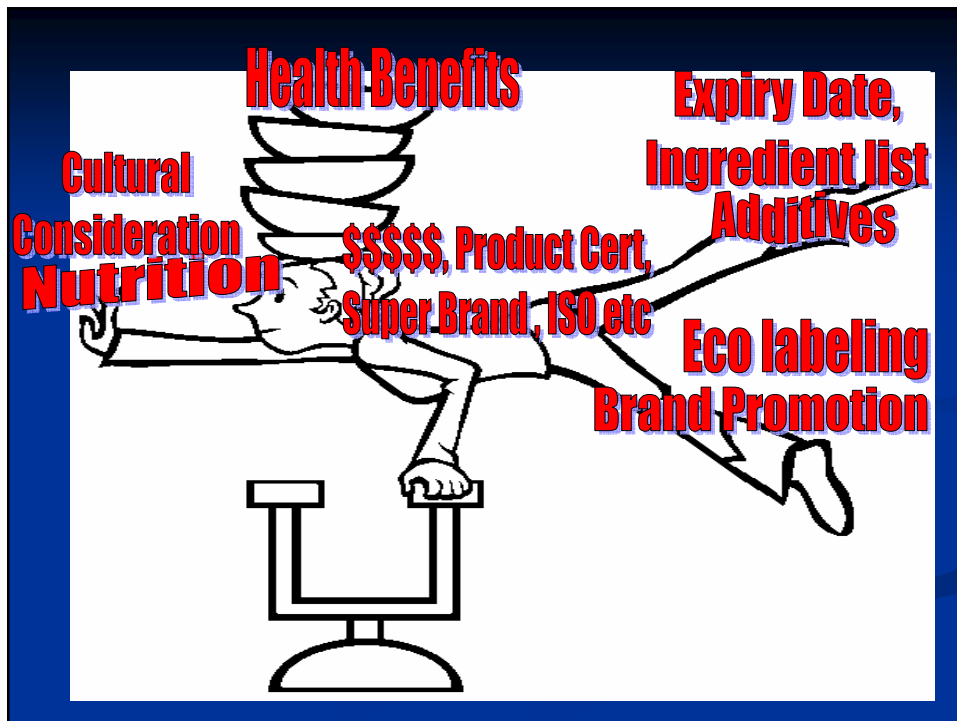
### Potential benefits:

- cheaper
- production costs,
- food attribute enhancements

**VS**

### Potential Cost:

- unintended allergic responses,
- long-term health and environmental effects,
- IP issues
- ethical or moral issues



## Labeling Issues

- Labeling –
  - operators to provide the essential and/or useful information – lack regulation
  - allow consumers to make an informed choice at the time of buy
  - Consumers have a lack of time
  - Space on a label is limited;
  - Too much information on the label will increase the risk - misinterpretation

## Labeling Consideration:

- Compliance status – legal requirements
- Labeling should promote fair competition between operators (conventional rice / crops and GM rice / crops;
- Some survey : No GM better acceptance than contains GM (The Impacts of Message and Messenger on Consumer Perceptions of Labels and Products Brian Roe and Mario F. Teisl; 2004) – Better acceptance if label is endorsed by authorities

## Stakeholder Engagement

- CODEX calls for national level engagement with civil society –
  - How effective and who ensures?
- CSOs – better access and competency to engage with consumers / public
  - Tendency to trust CSOs rather than government or industry
- Need CODEX (FAO, WHO) level stakeholder engagement and capacity building

## Suggestions / Recommendations

- Communication should be structured to ensure that ethical components of food-safety are clearly identified:
  - Transparent
  - Accountability
  - Rule of Law
  - Consideration for community (farmers etc)
- Effective stakeholder engagement.
- Need to address IP / patent issues – if food security issues to be addressed

## Suggestions / Recommendations

- Framework GM
  - Consider sustainable food production preserving biodiversity and respecting the values of nature, while taking into consideration ethical objectives and social equity in respect to regional conditions, needs and wants.
  - Value a country's sovereignty to produce its own food –
  - False pricing

Thank you!