

Experiences with Public Awareness and Outreach Activities

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Joint Aarhus Convention/Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety Workshop
on Public Awareness, Access to Information and Public Participation
Regarding Living/Genetically Modified Organisms
Nagoya, Japan, 8-9 October 2010

Background and Experiences

- Third World Network (TWN)
- Biosafety programme
 - Analysis and research
 - Capacity building
 - Awareness and education
 - Dedicated biosafety website (www.biosafety-info.net) and information service on biosafety
 - Publications
 - Organization of meetings and seminars

Needs and Challenges

- Who provides the information?
- What kind of information?
 - Not just about biosafety, but also about the non-GMO alternatives to meet development priorities
- How is the information presented?
 - Transparency and openness
 - Communicating complex scientific issues

Needs and Challenges

- How to communicate scientific uncertainty and scientific disagreement?
- Who gets what information?
 - False divide between scientific, and socio-economic and ethical issues
- What information gets disclosed?
 - Need to support the right to information and the right to prior informed consent
 - E.g. location of release sites

Needs and Challenges

- How to deal with confidential information?
 - Article 21 needs to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with Article 23
 - Define nationally the scope and criteria/conditions for claims for protection of confidential information
 - TRIPS: secret, commercial value, subject to reasonable to keep secret; protect undisclosed data against disclosure, except where necessary to protect the public
- How to reach out to sectors that are not organized?

Concluding Thoughts

- Access to information is integral to awareness-raising
- Access to information in a timely manner is necessary for effective public participation
- Not just about raising awareness about biosafety issues, but also about raising awareness about the public's rights
 - to information, to participation, to access to justice

Concluding Thoughts

- Awareness and access to information are necessary pre-conditions for meaningful public participation and access to justice
- Biosafety awareness and outreach is about empowering the public, as well as enabling policy makers to make informed choices

Thank you!

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