

Public Research & Regulation

Foundation with the objective to involve the public research sector in regulations and international agreements relevant to modern biotechnology

Second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Montreal, Canada, 30 May - 3 June 2005).

Statement on Public Awareness and Public Participation

Mr. Chairman, the Foundation for Public Research and Regulation regards public awareness and public participation as very important mechanisms to ensure that the public is provided with a balanced view of both the potential benefits and the potential risks of the development and use of LMOs.

In fact, we believe that there is an urgent need for an extra effort in public awareness, because there are a number of persistent misconceptions in the public debate about modern biotechnology and the risks involved of applying LMOs.

For example, there is a widespread perception that modern biotechnology is mainly the domain of a few big western multinationals and that LMOs will mainly be exported from developed countries to developing countries.

This is not the case. Public research institutes in most developing countries in the world are working on biotechnological solutions to address very serious local issues concerning food security, health, and environmental protection.

Second, in many interventions there seems to be the underlying assumption that LMOs are inherently hazardous. This, too, is a misperception. LMOs are neither inherently risky nor inherently safe. Whether or not an LMO can cause damage is determined by scientific risk assessment on a case-by-case basis and depends on the characteristics of the LMO and the way it is applied in the environment.

I thank you very much for your attention.