Science informing
Austrian GMO Policy

International Workshop
„The Role of Science in Precautionary Decision-Making“
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Decisions should be based on a comprehensive and accurate risk assessment, including indirect and cumulative long-term effects.

Preventive action concerning protection of the environment and human & animal health.

The precautionary principle should be appropriately applied during implementation of GMO regulation; i.e. a precautionary approach to risk assessment, decision-making and risk management.
Austrian (Policy) Decisions

- Strengthening responsibilities of MS concerning evaluation and authorisation of GMO applications
  - specifically with regard to cultivation of GM-crops

- Implementation of safeguard measures concerning specific applications of GM-Plants:
  - Insect-resistant and herbicide tolerant GM maize lines for cultivation (MON810, T25) – *environmental concerns*
  - Insect-resistant GM maize for feed use (MON863) – *health concerns*
  - Herbicide-tolerant GM oilseed rape for import and processing (GT73, Ms8xRf3) – *environmental concerns*

- Implement scientific state of the art in risk assessment of GMO applications
  - Improved guidance for risk assessment
Austrian efforts

- Scientific review of relevant GMO-applications; case by case, taking into account regional specifics
  - Applications according to Dir. 2001/18/EC
  - Applications according to Reg. (EC) 1829/2003
  - Review of monitoring

- Review of available guidance for application of the regulatory framework
  - Improvements, e.g. evaluation of toxicological / allergological effects, environmental risk assessment
  - Consultations with EFSA and other MS
EU-Context for Austrian proposals

- Initiatives by a number of Member States with a view to improvements regarding GMO regulation
  - Results of the Conference on the role of Precaution in GMO Policy (April 2006)
  - Conclusions of the EU Environment Council of Ministers (Dec 2008)
    - Recognition of key role of Member States
    - Take into account the specific regional characteristics with a view to the application of the Precautionary principle
    - More scientific cooperation to resolve contentious issues

- Proposals by the EC and EFSA
  - Review of current regulatory procedures
  - Review of the role of EFSA and Member States
  - Improved consultation between EU institutions and MS
Development of (scientific) basis of GMO assessment:

- Studies conducted by Austrian scientific institutions
  - Review of environmental risk assessment of GM-crops (Umweltbundesamt, 2009)
  - Cross-pollination between maize plots (AGES, 2008)

- Participation at the international level
  - OECD Working group on the harmonisation of regulatory oversight in biotechnology: *Consensus Document on environmental considerations*
  - Cartagena Protocol (Art. 1 calls for implementation of a precautionary approach): *AHTEG deliberations on specifics of GMO risk assessment*
Assessment and improvement of the application of the precautionary principle (PP) in GMO regulation

- Ongoing activities of the Austrian authorities concerning application of the precautionary principle
  - In various fields (Chemicals, GMOs, ...)
  - At various levels (national, EU, international)

- Conferences on the roles of Precaution in Chemicals Policy (Nov. 2001) and in GMO Policy (April 2006)

- Umweltbundesamt project to devise suggestions for further implementation of the PP in GMO regulation
Considerations for a precautionary approach in GMO regulation

- Analysis of the state of implementation of the Precautionary Principle in GMO regulation
  - Workshops and expert interviews
- Participants
  - EFSA, EEA
  - National scientific advisory panels
  - National authorities
  - Science
  - Industry / NGOs
- Suggestions concerning a way forward
  - Follow up together with the EEA
  - in cooperation with other Member States
Steps to a Way forward

- Comprehensive precautionary approach with regard to the overall context of GMO regulation
  - Improvements for risk assessment AND risk management
- Strengthen Member States responsibilities to better accommodate regional aspects in the evaluation of GMOs
  - Implement Council Conclusions (Dec 2008)
  - Consider results of conference „Regional Aspects in Precautionary GMO Decision Making”, 26.3-27.3.2009
- Improve expertise for the ecological assessment:
  - Scientific knowledge concerning environmental effects
  - Involvement of European EPAs and EEA
Thank you
for your attention!

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