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Hungary

Biotechnology

Consumer Perceptions

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Report Highlights:

The Hungarian public is rather pragmatic about biotechnology, and science and scientists have a good reputation in Hungary. This is why biotechnology is mainly deemed as a natural science issue, and the public is not hysterical about it. However, the following opinions reflect reoccurring "buzz words" and themes perpetuated by the media, as well as an increasing disillusion with authorities

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Hungarian consumers find the increasing number of additives (non-food additives) on food labels similar to biotech use – both produce cheap junk food for high profit by multinationals.

Many people classify traditionally produced food as good versus junk food with food substitutes and biotech product

There is a concern that harmful effects of biotech food are not yet known (it may be carcinogenic, it accumulates in your body for long time, the effects may manifest themselves in your children, etc.)

Other consumer questions often heard follow: What is the allergenic effect of biotech foods? (it is not necessary a drastic effect; it may not affect everyone but joins to other harmful effects in a “time bomb” or “snowball”)

Biotech products may be the “nukes” of agriculture. Nuclear energy has a problem of nuclear wastes. Biotechnology may resolve short-term problems but may create bigger ones longer-term.

Biotechnology may damage creatures of the natural environment (e.g. Danais butterflies). If these rumors (Danais, superweeds etc.) did not prove true, how come studies (with positive results) were not published?

No results of research on the effects of feeding/consumption of biotech products are published in the (popular) media. Why?

Biotech varieties genetically influence the animal/plant creatures of the environment

The “gene” remains active after being digested and affects the consumer. Pieces of biotech plants (root, stem) remained in the soil may affect the next cultivated plans in the same field.

After cross breeding with wild plants, the progenies may oppress the natural (wild) species (“SUPERWEED”)

It is not true that biotechnology is only a directed way of “natural” breeding. In biotechnology, genes of different species are mixed (consumers perceive something similar after the start of BSE)

Biotech plant varieties can not be multiplied easily. If the farmer changes his technology for it, he will be a slave to big business who owns the variety. Traditional varieties (diversified production alternatives) will disappear in the meantime.

There is a parallel between the increase of food born illnesses (food safety concerns) and biotech products. Profit hungry producers risk the health of consumers for their own personal gain.

The public is misled. Owners of the concentrated agro-chemical manufacturer lobby keep markets, as well as research-development in hand.

= The developed world (USA) wishes to export the “dirty technology” of biotechnology to developing countries, similar to other harmful technologies.

The use of biotechnology can be kept under control better in medicine, and in medicine the goal is not only to make higher profits.

Basic research should be financed by governments (rather than companies) to limit the profit seeking at any price (on the consumer) and guarantee objectivity.

Production of biotech crops does not result in less chemical use. It results in only other kinds of chemicals being used.

People at large think that biotechnology affects far more plant and animal species than it actually does.

One opinion: I consume the most possible "bio" (organic) food to eat less biotech products.