

Panel III Summary

Emerging Biosafety Capacity / Capabilities in Developing Countries

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For the first time we have a panel for developing countries in our row of symposia, but it is difficult to define what a "developing country" is in biotechnology. Our science is progressing very rapidly, and we all are developing countries in biotechnology. More and more crop plants are approved for field release, and are grown on an increasing acreage. Biosafety is a must for all countries, independent from national biotechnology research capacities, and we appreciate to hear about developing legislation in so many countries.

The progress since our last symposium is tremendous. Discussing and establishing guidelines or laws is one side, applying them the other. Regulatory work costs money, and it has to pay back. With growing benefits from transgenic plants, countries with no regulations so far will become interested to develop their national regulations. Finally, the market will decide about acceptance and success of a product.

There is a growing number of people to feed, and the great success in raising the yields by conventional breeding achieved during the last forty years cannot satisfy the population in many countries in the near future.

Central and South America are centers of biodiversity for a long list of crop plants: beans, potatoes, tomatoes, cassava, peanut, pineapple, cocoa, and rubber. This list includes names of transgenic plants ready for commercial growing. There is concern in South American countries because of this special situation, and precautions may be necessary.

There has been a growing awareness in developing countries about biosafety. These countries expect great benefits by growing transgenic plants since they have problems to feed their population in future years. But they have understood that certain rules have to be observed. A compromise between taking over rules, results and approvals from other countries and testing in local environment should be found. Within a short time no difference between developed and developing countries can be observed anymore.

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