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Renationalising GM Cultivation in Europe; An ethical analysis

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Personal professional perspective based upon work at the Rathenau Instituut and Chairing the Sub-committee on Ethics and Societal Aspects of the Committee on Genetic Modification

GMCC, Amsterdam

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1833 – 1933
A century of
progress



Science Finds,
Industry Applies,
Man Conforms

- Focus is solely on safety considerations
 - All arguments ‘translated’ to safety discourse
 - Overload of safety discourse
- Attempt to create separate discourse
 - Criteria besides safety considerations
 - Socio-economic aspects of GM crops
- Re-focus the safety discussion
 - Rejection without ‘unsafe’ argumentation
 - Proper place for other pro & con arguments

Proposed solution april 2015

- Amendment of Directive 2001/18/EC: the possibility for Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory

- 2 steps:
- Please exclude my territory
 - IF NOT, ...
- Allow national regulation to forbid cultivation on my territory
 - Other reasons (beyond safety assessment)
 - Reasonable and defensible decision (rule of law)
 - In line with EU and WTO agreements (not disturbing trade)

- Non-limitative list for restricting or prohibiting GMO cultivation
 - Broader environmental policy
 - Town and country planning
 - Land use
 - Socioeconomic impact
 - Avoidance of GMO presence in other products
 - Agricultural objectives
 - Public policy

- It is no longer about GM: new technologies
- It is impossible in international law
- It breaks up the EU
- There is no scientific basis for this regulation
- If we allow these arguments: the end of free trade
- If we allow these arguments: unpredictability
- Etc. etc. etc.

**CONTEXTUALISING in
EVIDENCE BASED POLICY**

Policies based in science (analysis and facts, EBP)

- Societal benefit:
 - Better solutions for complex problems
 - Factual base for policy making
- Political benefit:
 - More successful in realising their goals
 - Reduction of uncertainty & neutral grounds
- Scientific benefit:
 - Relevance of science
 - Influence on the public realm

- Science complaints :
 - ‘Politicians don’t listen’ (fact-free politics)
 - ‘Politicians and society are cherry-picking evidence’
- Political complaints:
 - ‘Scientists present their evidence inconvenient’
 - ‘Scientific evidence does not convince society’
- Societal complaints:
 - ‘Googling, I find other facts; Pushing, I find uncertainty’
 - ‘ This scientific evidence does not relate to my concerns’

1. Mobile telephone radiation (UMTS-Health)
 - Safety studies (TNO), Health Council advice etc.
2. HPV-vaccination (against cervical cancer)
 - National Institute for Public Health and Environment
3. Carbon capture storage (under an urban area)
 - Environmental Impact Assessment
4. Shale-gas (Experimental drilling)
 - Environmental impact assessment
5. Climate-gate (IPCC-controversies)
 - IPCC scientific assessment-reports

It starts with organized advisory structure

- IPCC, advisory organisations, permit structure ...

A legitimate counter-discourse pops up

- Local council, '50 professors', contradicting experts, 'googled facts', TV-documentaries, 'long term effects?'

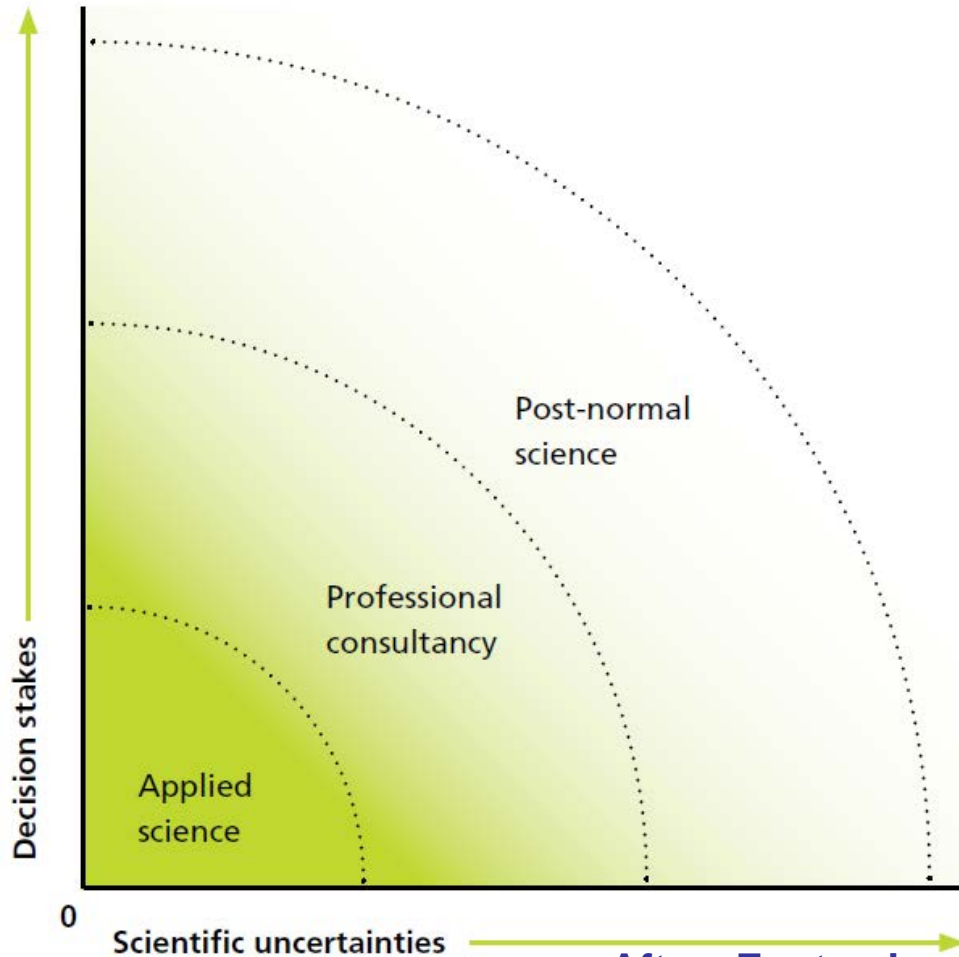
Science and policy try to focus on scientific debate

- New-studies, more reports, restating procedures,

However, societal debate is fuelled by broader issues

- Financial gain, price of houses, teenage sexuality, free market, national gains-local burden

Wicked problems, heated debate



After: Funtowicz & Ravetz 1993

- Responding to the results of alarming studies on the safety of gmos (COGEM topic report CGM/131031-01):
<http://www.cogem.net/index.cfm/en/publications/publicatie/where-there-is-smoke-is-there-fire-responding-to-the-results-of-alarming-studies-on-the-safety-of-gmos>
- Mampuys, R. & F.W.A. Brom, 2015a. Governance strategies for responding to alarming studies on the safety of GM crops, *Journal of Responsible Innovation*, 2(2), 201-219.
- Mampuys, R. & F.W.A. Brom, 2015b. Ethics of dissent: a plea for argumentative restraint in the scientific debate about the safety of GM crops, *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics* 28: 903-924

1. Don't narrow policy issues to scientific questions

In public controversies broader questions fuel the debate: don't ignore them

2. Organize a broader socio-political debate

In public controversies broader questions need a socio-political solutions: organize this

3. Build common research agenda

In public controversies different stakeholders have items that deserve scientific analysis: prioritize it

4. Create transparency over scientific uncertainty

In public controversies different stakeholders try to present their position as scientific inevitable: fight this

- Accept that the GM debate is a broad debate
 - GM-production is not only about environmental safety
 - GM-food consumption is not solely about safe nutrients
- Take the burden from the safety debate
 - Confine the safety debate to real safety issues
 - Focus on consensus building and learning
- Open the broader debate
 - Accept European pluralism (citizens, regions & countries)
 - Focus on plurality supporting regulation (eg co-existence)

- Without national opt-out possibility there is no way forward
 - Yes, the regulation is impossible, but that has never stopped Europe
- Opt-out regulation opens up discussion on benefits
 - The safety debate focusses on risks, we need benefit debate
- Politics might be science based, it is **never** science driven
 - Without citizen and stakeholder acceptance: **NO GM-future**

Towards a food policy

The Netherlands has for years pursued a successful agricultural policy. However, the world of food has changed and food has become the subject of intense public debate. The issues that are important in the Netherlands cannot be seen in isolation from global developments.

The challenges at global level relate to ecological sustainability, public health and the robustness of the food supply. In *Towards a food policy*, the WRR explores the consequences of those challenges for the Netherlands and the specific vulnerabilities, opportunities and responsibilities they create for the Dutch government and Dutch society.

It is time for an explicit food policy; a policy that takes into account the diversity of values in relation to food, the relationship between production and consumption and the changing power relations in the food system. In this report, the Council also highlights the need to invest in the resilience of the food system.

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