

*Seminar "Biotechnology, the Media and Public Policy"
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"Public concerns about GMOs in Latin America"

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Contents

- The main concerns in Latin America
- The main expectations in Latin America
- The role of the media and civil society
- Influencing public perception and national policies
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- Conclusions



Some facts on the development of GM crops and food

- GM cash crop development is concentrated in a handful of big transnational corporations
- High returns for firm stakeholders determine the dynamics of the 'gene revolution'
- Developing countries already represent over 26% of all GM crop land (Argentina and China)
- Ag-biotech innovations are not addressing the needs of the poor (food security)
- Developing countries have limited resources to develop GM applications responding to their needs



Public policy concerns in Latin American countries

- Food safety risks
- Trade-related risks
- Technology dependence
- How to implement sound biosafety regulatory systems?
- Dissemination of illegal transgenic crops
- Socio-economic impacts on the poor
- Risk of biodiversity loss
- Biopiracy



What Latin America expects from ag-biotech?

- Ensuring food security
- Increasing competitiveness of agricultural exports
- Developing applications for the sustainable use of local biodiversity
- Effective technology transfer
- Collaboration with advanced biotechnology actors
- Strengthening local capacities



CamBioTec socio-economic studies (1997-2000)

Country	Title	Institute	Principal Researcher
Mexico	<i>Impacts of maize biotechnology</i>	UAE Morelos	R. Quintero
Mexico	<i>Future impacts of biotechnology applications to henequén (agave)</i>	UAY + CICY	A. Eastmond
Mexico	<i>Impacts of biotechnology in potato culture</i>	UAM	M. Chauvet
Mexico	<i>Biotechnology impacts in the swine sector</i>	UAM	L. Kato
Argent	<i>Public policies vs. orientation of R&D towards biotechnology</i>	U. Quilme s	J.C. Carullo



The Public Perception debate in Latin America

- How consumers react to GM crops and food?
- How much confidence do they have in these DNA technologies?
- Do they perceive a direct benefit for them or only for farmers and firms?
- Promotion of communications and public education
- Who are participating in this effort?
- How to influence policy makers?



Communications in Latin America

ARGENTINA: representative associations from the private sector promote public education: ASA*, AAPRESID*, FAB*, other industry associations.

BRAZIL: main actors are CIB (agbioindustry association) and ANBio (national association of biosafety)

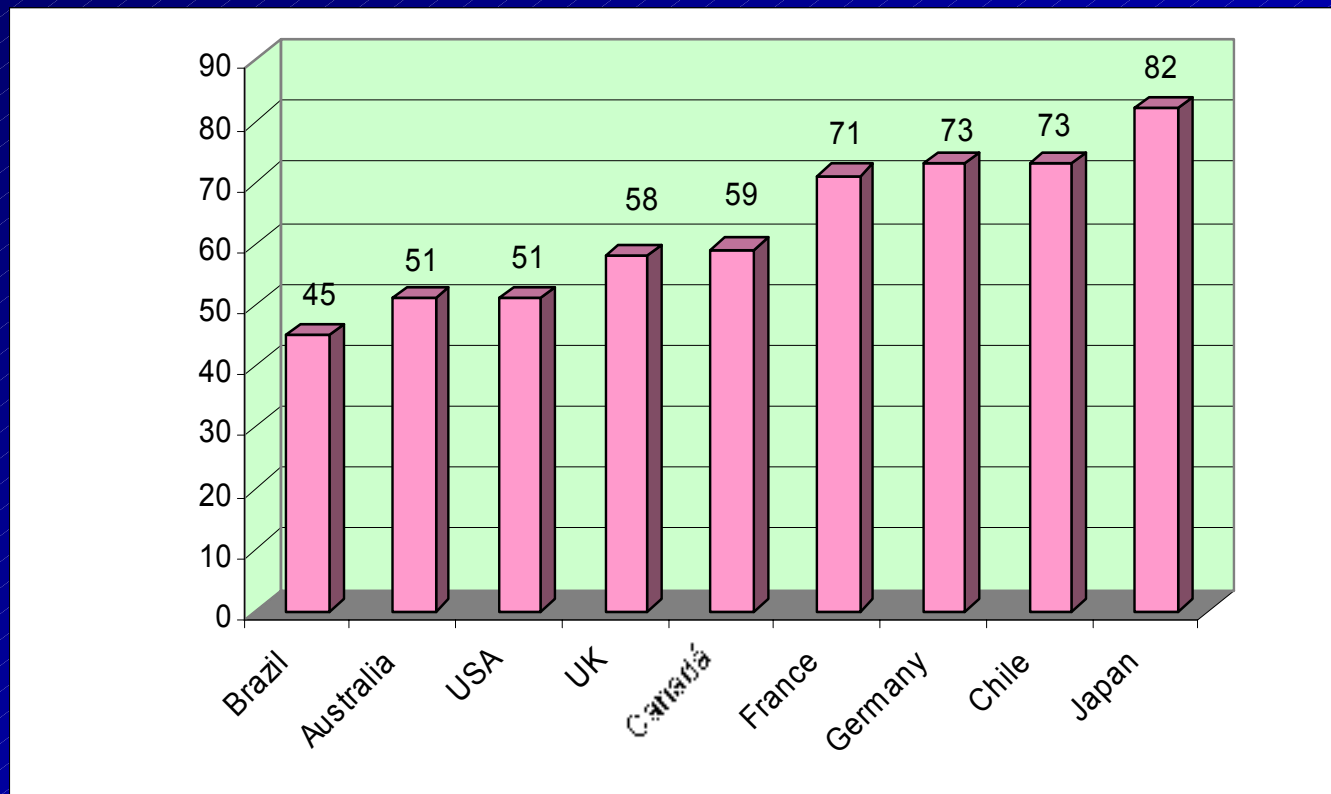
COLOMBIA: main actor is AgroBio, the agbioindustry association

MEXICO: The only groups having formal public perception strategies are Greenpeace and AgroBio Mexico

REGIONAL: Electronic bulletins and distribution lists by CamBioTec, RedBio-FAO and other organizations.

* Websites are listed at the end

GM Food: Negative Public Perception Levels (%)



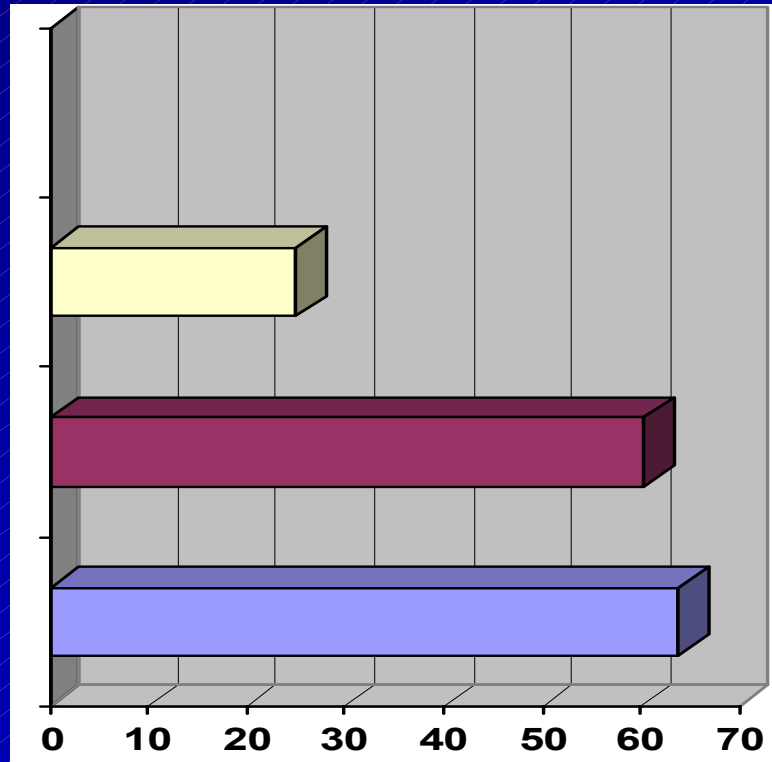
SOURCE: L. Gil et al., CamBioTec-Chile, Santiago 2001

CHILE: Survey in Santiago (2000)

YES, I would eat GM food ▶

YES, eating GM food may produce cancer ▶

YES, using biotechnology to produce GM food should be forbidden ▶

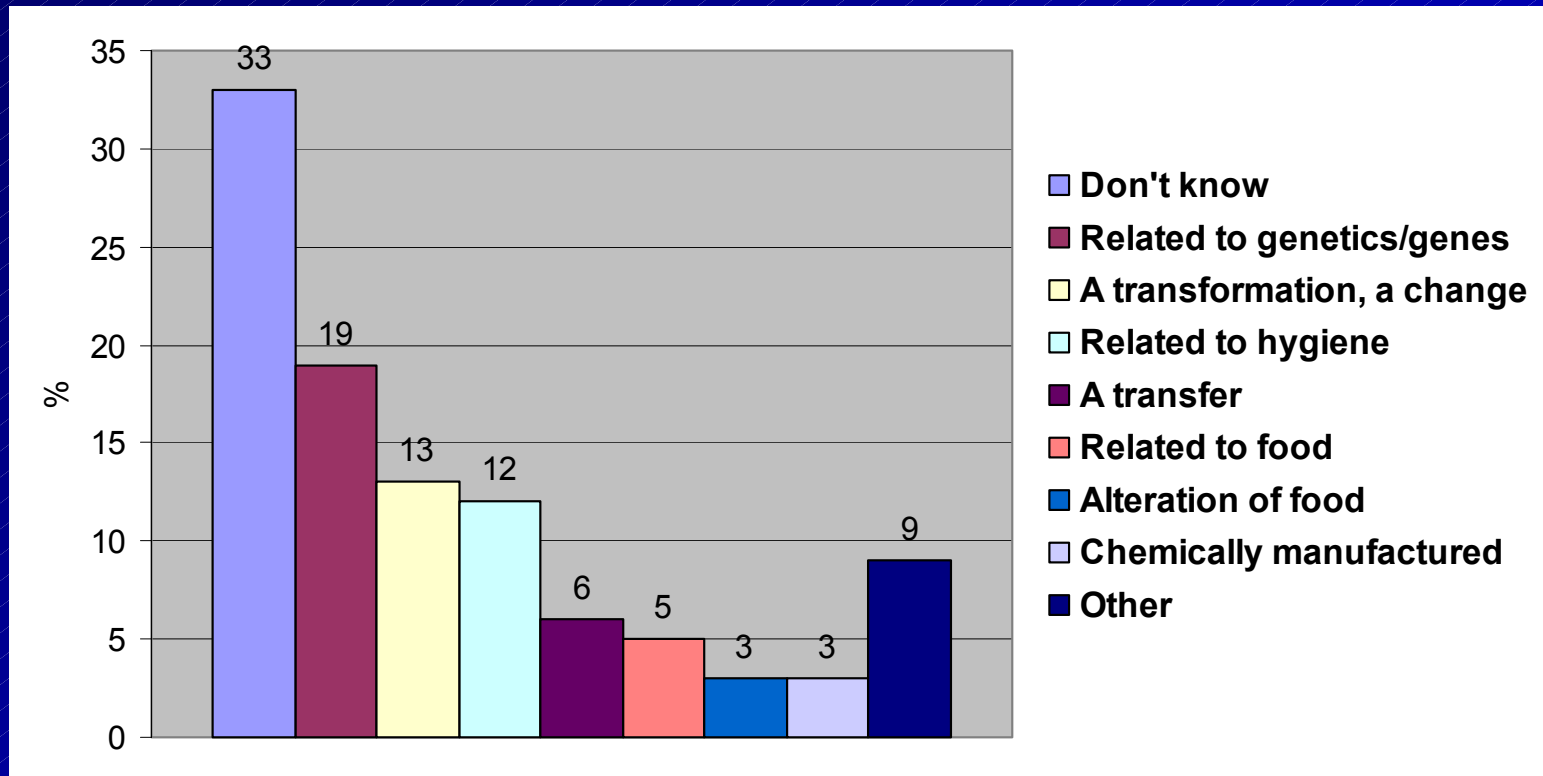


BASIS: Home interviews to 300 housewives

SOURCE: L. Gil et al., CamBioTec-Chile, Santiago 2001

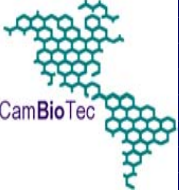
MEXICO: A consumers survey (2000)

What means “transgenics” for you?



BASIS: 403 interviews with consumers

SOURCE: J. Solleiro, AgroBio Mexico, 2001



CamBioTec experiences in Latin America - 1

- **CIDA-funded Project on Biosafety and Public Perception in Argentina and Chile (1998-2000)**
 - 10 internships of Latin Americans in Canada
 - 6 courses on risk assessment & management
 - 4 seminars on Public Perception and Risk Assessment
 - Advice on communications strategies
 - Edition of two books with seminar proceedings
- **IDRC-funded perception surveys (2000-2001):**
 - food industry in Argentina, housewives in Chile, consumers in Mexico
- **Seminars at National Congresses (various sponsors):**
 - Argentina (1997), Chile (1998) and Peru (2002)



CamBioTec experiences in Latin America - 2

- **Communications in Colombia (1999-2000):**
 - Seminar “Biotechnology for Journalists” (Bogota 1999)
 - Analysis of media coverage of the International Biosafety Summit (Cartagena, Bogota, 1999)
 - Radio broadcasting programs (Bogota, 1999-2000)
- **OAS-funded project on the Biosafety Protocol in Chile, Peru and Colombia (2002-2003):**
 - National studies to determine the status of regulatory systems and needs of training
 - Training seminars in the 3 countries
- **OAS proposal for a Fase 2 project**
 - In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Jamaica, Trinidad&Tobago, Ecuador. Pre-approved in May 2003.



Some Conclusions

- Generally, wide levels of ignorance
- No common strategies of stakeholders excepted in Argentina
- Decision makers and journalists lack education and trustable information
- Scientists need to be more involved
- Need to increase capacities to communicate
- Governments must be involved in the promotion of public education
- International collaboration



Recommended Communications Strategies

- Be proactive, create national task forces
- Acknowledge that debate is NOT about SCIENCE
- Promote public participation in all regulatory decisions
- Select trustable sources and spoke people
- Train competent spoke people
- Provide simple, clear, accurate information
- Use an appropriate cultural model



Some internet sites in Latin America

- www.foarbi.org.ar
- www.porquebiotecnologia.com.ar/
- www.abrabi.org.br/
- www.anbio.org.br/
- www.agrobiomexico.org
- www.rlc.fao.org/redes/redbio/
- www.bioplanet.net/
- www.ejb.org/index.html



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