

The GMOs are widely cropped in an increasing number of countries. Brazil is the second largest grower of GM crops in the world, next to the US, planting 42.2 million hectares of biotech crops in 2014. Despite the relatively high adoption rates the GM crops are far from being widely accepted. In many countries, attempts to introduce and establish GM food crops led to disputes among different stakeholders.

In Brazil GM crops have been a controversial issue differently from neighboring Argentina where GM crops were adopted in 1996 without opposition. The illegal introduction of GM soybeans in Brazil was an experience that has shown the importance of a solid and workable legal framework and the necessity of previous discussion with stakeholders - not just the ones directly linked to the development of the trait and or crop, like public research institutions, biotechnology companies, farmers, to say some, but also with consumers, consumer rights advocates, environmentalists, health professionals and media.

Quantitative research conducted at the time of intense controversy in Brazil, with representative samples of the population instigated by Greenpeace, revealed broad public rejection of GMOs. But quite a few efforts were made to understand the viewpoints of different sectors of society in relation to GM products.

I had the privilege to participate in some of those few initiatives and I will share, during the presentation, the experiences acquired

Aspects of public perception and communication were addressed in different formats during the development of such projects: manual for "Problem Formulation", stakeholders' panel, online questionnaires, semi structured interviews, among others. One experience in particular was carried out by four countries in Latin America in the context of the project LAC Biosafety (5), where environmental impacts and public perception/communication were partenered in the same project. Demand from the public consulted in the context of this project resulted in the preparation and supply of brochures, courses, training and even TV and radio programs. Among the training, those targeting media professionals sought to stimulate scientific culture - empowerment process of the general public so that they can obtain credible information on GMOs, facilitating the taking of personal decision (in its various formats).

For the Brazil case-study under the LAC Biosafety umbrella, it was possible to identify and describe: common groups of attitudes toward GMOs; patterns of association between the common attitude groups and variables like socioeconomic characteristics, trust in institutions as information sources and familiarity with the Brazilian biosafety authority; how these variables play important roles in defining patterns of attitudes toward GMOs; the implications of these relationships for the development of a communication strategy plan that would promote public awareness and stimulate a well-informed Brazilian public debate on biosafety.



Deise Maria Fontana Capalbo

Embrapa - Brazil

deise@cnpma.embrapa.br

Summary of lecture

Communication and public perception of GMO in Brazil: the importance of shaping a communication strategy

All experiences and achievements in those research projects had their impact and recently we got the opportunity to multiply the experience, adapt it and expand it to other countries - Kenya and Uganda. By sharing the experiences of Brazil and research findings with those countries, it is expected that they can move forward in the decisions on GMOs in accordance with their own principles and desires, but not losing sight of the science that gives base to advance safely.

Some lessons learned over our work: (*) cooperation between groups of technical and scientific research and the groups of communicators is key to effective communication of best available science; (*) the characterization of stakeholders (their desires, trust and interest) is essential for an effective communication plan; (*) interest groups are similar but the power structure is different for each country; (*) the understanding of the power structure is key to define the better way to assure a delivery of scientific facts for the decision-making process.

Brazil has a great opportunity to lead the use of GMOs in agricultural production in their energy options and other markets, such as climate issues or biomass. Legal certainty translated into accurate regulatory processes, efficient and based on the best science is the key to develop this potential.

Short Bio

Deise has graduated in Food Engineering; got her Ph.D. in Bioengineering at the University of Campinas – Unicamp; taught at the Pontificia Universidade Católica de Campinas and at Unicamp between 1983 and 1985 as Adjunct Professor in Fermentation processes. Since 1985 she is a researcher at the Brazilian Agriculture Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) in its Environment Research Unit (Embrapa Environment) at Jaguariúna – Sao Paulo. She has experience in microbiology, with emphasis on Industrial Fermentation, mainly focusing on *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) and microbial pest control. Over the past 15 years she also developed studies on risk assessment and risk analysis of GM plants as member or coordinator of research projects. Public perception and communication were always part of the themes developed by such teams.

W2 ORGANIC CITRUS PRODUCTION