

Genetically Modified Food in the New Risk Society

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Abstract

Although the notion of risk is inseparable from the idea of uncertainty, there has traditionally been a fundamental conceptual difference between the two: its measurability. Uncertainty was considered immeasurable, while in risk, on the contrary, was considered feasible to establish what the possible options were and determine the probabilities of each of them.

Today, in the field of genetically modified organisms, it is impossible to quantify these new risks linked to scientific and technological development, making a new idea of risk necessary, which brings this concept closer to the classic idea of uncertainty: the uncertain risk.

Keywords: GMO; Risks; Biotechnology; Food; Liability

Abbreviations

GMO: Genetically Modified Organisms

Introduction

While the notion of risk is inseparable from the idea of uncertainty, traditionally there was a fundamental conceptual difference between the two: its possibility of measurement. The uncertainty was considered immeasurable. Forecasts could be made about it, but this was only speculation. "Uncertainty points to the unknown" [1].

In the risk, on the contrary, it was considered feasible to establish what were the possible options and determine the probabilities of each of them.

When analyzing the risks in the field of genetically modified plants (foods that are produced by skipping the barriers between natural species), although not only the health of consumers should

be considered, but also the aspects related to the interaction of the plant with the ecosystem where it is developed must be analyzed; the possibility of generation of antibiotic-resistant genes, multiple organ damage, mortality and tumors, various hormonal effects, among others, are identified as potential risks to human health.

Materials and Methods

The research carried out responds to a bibliographic, exploratory and descriptive design. The consultation and analysis of specialized bibliography was used.

Results and Discussion

Within modern sociological currents, the consequences of this type of activity are framed within a specific terminology: new risks. While public and scientific discourse support this, it is no longer a question of choosing between safe and risky alternatives, but between a series of risky alternatives. Specifically, the phenomenon of competition between risks is presented in order to define which is the "least bad" of all [2].

We understand risk as a danger or natural threat to the global techno-industrial system. In this context, we are aware that zero risk does not exist, and even less in the activities and products of these times, such as the production and consumption of genetically modified organisms.

The great conflict that currently arises is the impossibility of quantifying these new risks linked to scientific and technological development, given that they are often invisible, unpredictable and imperceptible to the future affected, and this greatly hinders the reconstruction of causal chains [3].

Thus, today a new construction of risk became necessary, which brings this concept closer and closer to that of the classic idea of uncertainty: uncertain risk.

Conclusion

We could affirm, in this sense, that the activities of modern biotechnology linked to the production of genetically modified plants carry with them, as an inescapable characteristic, an important uncertain risk factor, consisting of potential harm, which is essentially indeterminate and largely non-individualizable.

We understand that there are special cases in which, given the social function played by some activities and products (for example medicines), the assumption of indeterminate risks by society could be justified.

We do not, however, find in genetically modified foods a single convincing basis on which such a claim can be supported.

We conclude that it is necessary to contemplate and regulate these new legal situations from the perspective of the current constructions of the concept of risk, far from the obsolete notions of foreseeable and calculable risk.

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