
What policy issues are involved in the breeding of genetically modified food animals?

An interdisciplinary EC consortium (the PEGASUS project) examined issues raised by the development, implementation, and commercialisation of genetically modified (GM) animals, and derivative foods and pharmaceutical products. The results integrated existing social, (including existing public perception) environmental and economic knowledge regarding GM animals in order to formulate policy recommendations relevant to new developments and applications

What are the research findings?

The research has shown that:

- Public perceptions of GM animals are more negative than the perceptions of GM plants.
- GM animals developed for food are perceived more negatively than those developed for pharmaceuticals.
- EU governance systems are reasonably well-prepared for pharmaceutical and agricultural GM animal applications.
- The public raise few issues about GM animal use in the pharmaceutical sector, assuming policy addresses relevant ethical and economic aspects.

What are the implications for UK and European policy?

The research considered the economic and technical advantages and disadvantages of GM animals used in the agrifood production sector:

- The introduction of agricultural GM animal applications should be considered on a case-by-case basis
- Consumer opinion is not necessarily negative towards GM/animal genomics being applied to food animals, but ethical issues remain a prominent societal concern
- Use of GM animals could be beneficial by enabling economic gains relating to production efficiency or improved animal welfare.

Further information:

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