

# FoEE Biotech Mailout

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## ***TRACEABILITY OF GMOS – THE MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS***

As reported in the last Mailout (see *Volume 2, Issue 6, 1.04/01*), over the past several months the European Commission has been working on its proposed Regulation concerning Traceability and Labelling of genetically modified organisms and traceability of food and feed products produced from GMOs. This is in response to the demands of six Member States – Austria, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg – which announced, following the adoption of the revised deliberate release Directive 2001/18/EC by the European Parliament in February this year, that they would not agree to any new GMO approvals until: (1) GM products can be traced back to their source and (2) all GMO-derived products are labelled.

### **Acceptance of unauthorised GMOs!**

The latest draft from the Commission dates from late May and is called "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning traceability and labelling of genetically modified organisms and traceability of food and feed products produced from genetically modified organisms **and amending Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms**". This text brings a completely new dimension into the debate since, as the name indicates, it proposes to revise the (very recently revised) deliberate release directive

(2001/18/EC) in order to allow the 'adventitious' presence of unauthorised GMOs!

The most recent draft proposal from the Commission therefore foresees allowable thresholds for the presence unauthorised GMOs and GMO derivatives. 'Adventitious and technically unavoidable' contamination of products by traces of unauthorised GMOs would be allowed provided they are below a certain threshold. The draft proposal mentions 1% as maximum.

***The most recent draft proposal from the Commission foresees allowable thresholds for the presence unauthorised GMOs and GMO derivatives***

Below we quote from the relevant part of the Commission's latest draft proposal:

*Article 11*

*Directive 2001/18/EC is amended as follows:*

*(1) The following Article 3a is inserted:*

*"Article 3a  
Adventitious presence of GMOs in products*



Friends of the Earth

*Articles 6 to 11 and 13 to 21 shall not apply to the intentional introduction into the environment or the placing on the market of adventitious or technically unavoidable traces of a GMO, or combination of GMOs, that have not received authorisation in accordance with the procedures of this Directive, provided that all of the following conditions are met:*

*a) operators must be in a position to supply evidence to satisfy the competent authority that traces of the GMO(s) are adventitious or technically unavoidable;*

*b) the GMO(s) has been approved in a third country for the use specified to take place in the Community and notified to the Commission together with the following information:*

*- regulatory status of the GMO(s) in the third country;*

*- description of the nucleic acid sequences or the modification introduced, the technique used, and the resulting characteristics of the GMO(s);*

*- risk assessment;*

*- appropriate sampling and detection methods;*

*- name and full address of the supplier of control samples;*

*- monitoring and handling of new information, as appropriate.*

*c) the GMO, or combination of GMOs, is present in an identical proportion or is below the threshold established in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 30(2), but not exceeding 1%.*

*Detailed rules for the implementation of this Article may be established in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 30(2)".*

#### **A practical example**

Under these new rules, if they were ever adopted as EU legislation, the following could happen:

One thousand salmon are imported into the EU for fish-farming. It turns out that ten of them are genetically modified. Provided the presence of these ten GM salmon is claimed to be 'adventitious and technically unavoidable' (whatever the definition of that might be), the import could, under the Commission's most recent draft proposal still be allowed since the 1% threshold would not be exceeded. Conversely, however, the intentional introduction of just one GM salmon would require a Community-wide marketing permit under the deliberate release Directive 2001/18/EC.

Ditto for a shipment of 50,000 tons of GM soya, of which 500 tons would be deemed allowable under this latest proposal.

***The proposal to allow creeping concessions which will undermine the regulatory framework is likely to increase public opposition to GMOs even further***

#### **US and industry pressure**

This latest initiative from the Commission is clearly a result of intense pressure by both the biotech industry and the US government, which has already made its opposition to EU legislation on traceability and labelling of GMOs very clear. Further lobbying has been directed at the Commission by other American interest groups such as the US Grains Council and the National Corn Growers Association. EU Commissioners David Byrne, Health and Consumer Safety, and Margot Wallström, Environment, are understood to be in disagreement on the issue with Wallström opposing any revision of Directive 2001/18/EC.

The Commission is well aware that this most recent proposal to legitimise illegal GMO contamination contradicts Directive 2001/18/EC. Article 4.5 of the Directive explicitly states:

"In the event of a release of GMO (s) or placing on the market as or in products for which no authorisation was given, the Member State concerned shall ensure that necessary measures are taken to terminate the release or placing on the market, to initiate remedial action if necessary, and to inform its public, the Commission and other Member States."

This proposal to legalise GMO contamination is unacceptable and will not please either the European Parliament or the Council since it disregards the lengthy and complex conciliation procedure between the two institutions which resulted in the revised Directive. It is also technically indefensible since the only real solution to GMO contamination is to determine satisfactory means to prevent it. This will become even more essential if it comes to crops producing pharmaceuticals or other chemicals that nobody would wish to have in their food.

From the point of view of European citizens and consumers, the proposal to allow creeping concessions which will undermine the regulatory framework is likely to increase public opposition to GMOs even further. The whole purpose for an EU Regulation on Traceability and Labelling was to enhance consumer confidence by ensuring complete traceability of GMOs and their derivatives 'from farm to fork', not to create loopholes for unauthorised GMOs to enter the market place through the back door.

Fortunately, the most recent draft referred to in this article is not the final text which is still under debate between the various Commission services, principally DG-Sanco and DG-Environment. Although Mrs. Wallstrom had hoped to put something on the table of the June Environment Council, a more realistic date for the Commission to present its final proposal is probably mid-July.

# DRAFT REGULATION ON NOVEL FOOD/FEED

In the 'White Paper on Food Safety' (COM(99) 719, Commissioner David Byrne set out the timetable for a number of legislative proposals, including a proposal for an EU Novel Feed Regulation. This was promised for September 2000 but, as mentioned in previous Mailouts (see *Volume 7, Issue 1, 1.02.01*), has failed to materialise so far. The Commission apparently now intends to table a set of proposals concerning GMOs at the same time, notably the one for Traceability and Labelling of GMOs and one for Novel Food/Feed.

The Commission's DG-Sanco (Health and Consumer Protection) is therefore working frantically on, (among others things), the proposed new Regulation concerning the authorisation and labelling of both GM food and feed. The new regulation will not supersede the existing Novel Food Regulation (Regulation EC n° 258/97) which will continue to apply to novel foods other than those derived from GMOs. Instead, the new Regulation's scope will cover both the approval procedure and the labelling rules for human food and animal feed consisting, containing or derived from GMOs.

The future regulation should certainly improve the current situation since, at present, processed GM animal feed does not have to be labelled at all, and (under Regulation 258/97) food products derived from GMOs only have to be labelled if DNA or proteins from the GMO can be detected in the final product. Even worse, there is currently no EU authorisation procedure for animal feed products derived from GMOs, despite the fact that the majority of GM soya and maize are destined for livestock nutrition.

## THE PROPOSED AUTHORISATION PROCEDURE

According to the draft Regulation, no GM food or feed shall be placed on the market until it has been assessed by the European Food Authority and subsequently authorised by the Commission which has to consult Member States (regulatory procedure). The European Food Authority would have 210 days to complete its opinion. Within three months of receipt of the Authority's opinion, the Commission must prepare a draft decision "to be taken in respect of the application, taking into account Community law and other factors as legitimate to the matter under consideration". Authorisations shall be limited to 10 years and be renewable. Where "appropriate", operators shall be required to monitor their products.

***The Commission intends to present a set of proposals at the same time, including Novel Food/Feed and Traceability/Labelling***

## LABELLING

Subject to the exemptions mentioned below (see '**Loopholes**'), food and feed containing, consisting of or derived from genetically modified organisms shall be labelled. This labelling requirement does not, however, apply if the presence of GMOs or derivatives is deemed to be 'adventitious' or below a threshold yet to be established. In order to demonstrate that the presence of GMOs or derivatives in a food or feed is 'adventitious', operators shall be "in a position to supply evidence to satisfy the Member State's competent authorities that they have taken appropriate steps to

avoid using the genetically modified organisms (or produce thereof) as a source."

Unfortunately, the draft Regulation does not define in detail which measures operators have to take at all stages of food production to prevent 'adventitious' contamination. The Commission's draft is lacking in this respect since it would leave it up to the national competent authorities to define which measures are appropriate. This could potentially lead to a situation where some foods would have to be labelled in one Member State but not in others. Furthermore, the draft Regulation does not even require the competent authorities to regulate which measures they consider as appropriate and thus leaves consumers and operators with legal uncertainty. The draft Regulation also fails to define measures to be taken by those operators in the food and feed chain who make use of GMOs or GM derivatives which aim at preventing contamination of other products.

## Labelling principles

GM food and feed shall carry the label "genetically modified", "produced from genetically modified [*name of organism*]" or "contains [*name of ingredient*] produced from genetically modified [*name of organism*]". Where food is sold without pre-packaging, the information has to be displayed on or in connection with the display of the food.

In addition, changes in composition, nutritional value or effects, intended use of the food and implications for health of certain sections of the population have to be labelled. A label is also required if a certain food may give rise to ethical or religious concerns.

## LOOPHOLES

Unsurprisingly, the current draft Regulation contains a number of worrying loopholes which will only consolidate public scepticism on the subject of GM foods.

### Loopholes for 'adventitious' contamination

On the positive side, the draft Regulation would require mandatory pre-marketing authorisation of all food and feed consisting of, containing or derived from GMOs. However, the regulation would not apply to food or feed products contaminated (in a proportion no higher than a threshold yet to be established) by GMOs or GMO derivatives which have not received market approval in the European Union, on condition that their presence is "adventitious".

Thus, in order to find a way round the future Regulation, all an operator would have to do is to show that:

- (a) the food or feed has been authorised in a third country and that the authorisation has been notified to the Commission, together with the appropriate sampling and detection methods, or
- (b) the food or feed has been notified for an experimental release in one of the Member States.

These exemptions are designed to legitimise the illegal import and use of GMOs which have not been approved in the EU, and are clearly a result of pressure from third parties such as the United States government and biotech industries. Exemption (a) is in complete contradiction to the newly revised deliberate release Directive 2001/18/EC which prohibits the import of unauthorised GMOs in whatever proportion it may occur. In this regard, Article 21 (2) of the new directive foresees a threshold below which products that contain GMOs do not have to be labelled, but this threshold only applies to adventitious or technically unavoidable traces of authorised GMOs. Exemption (b) tends to blur the important distinction between field trials and commercial releases of GMOs and the different authorisation conditions that apply.

### Loopholes for labelling

Also on the positive side, the draft proposal would require labelling of all GM food and feed regardless of whether GMO material can be detected in the final product. However, food and feed which contains GMOs or GMO derivatives in a proportion no higher than a threshold yet to be established would not have to be labelled provided, once again, that the contamination is "adventitious". As in the case of authorisation, in the draft Regulation the Commissions fails to define what this threshold for "adventitious" contamination would be. The draft also leaves open the question of what exactly is meant by the term "adventitious", and what precautionary measures must be taken by operators at all stages of food/feed production in order to prevent GMO contamination, as well as what action should be taken by those operators which use GMOs or GM derivatives in order to avoid contamination of other products.

***The exemptions are designed to legitimise illegal imports and use of GMOs, and are clearly a result of pressure from third parties***

### Loopholes 'on the farm'

Also according to the draft Regulation, feed products of vegetable or animal origin in their natural state which are provided by a farmer-producer to a breeder-user, both of whom are established in the same Member State, would not have to be labelled. This exception effectively means that there could, within any Member State, be widespread growing of GM crops and subsequent feeding of these crops to livestock, without any labelling or traceability of either the crop itself or the animals that are raised on it. This concept is clearly in complete contradiction with the other Commission proposal which is imminent (*see first article in this Mailout*) for a Regulation on Traceability and Labelling of GMOs which aims to meet the demands

of several Member States by ensuring complete traceability of GMOs 'from farm to fork'

### OTHER ISSUES

#### A European Food Authority for feed?

The draft Regulation proposes the European Food Authority as advisory body for both GM food and feed. However, the current EFA proposal explicitly excludes feed from the definition of food and limits the Authority's mandate to feed issues which could directly or indirectly have an impact on food safety. EU Member States still have to agree whether or not the Authority should also have the mandate for monitoring areas of animal welfare and plant health that do not have an impact on the safety of the animal chain. Depending on the outcome of this decision, the Food Authority could ultimately be the wrong institution when it comes to GM feed.

#### Dual use products

The draft Regulation requires products which are "likely to be used both as food and feed" to be authorised for both purposes. This provision is obviously motivated by the recent US StarLink maize crisis. However, the proposal for dual authorisation will not prevent such scandals as long as GMOs do not have to be authorised for both purposes at the seed level, which is currently not the case. The draft Regulation would not cover seeds since they may be qualified as "plants prior to harvesting" which are excluded from the definition of "food".

#### Food enzymes

It is unclear whether the draft Regulation covers food enzymes produced with the aid of genetically modified micro-organisms (GMMs). On the one hand, these enzymes are clearly derived from GMOs - the draft regulation defines "derived from a genetically modified organism" as meaning "produced, in whole or in part, from a genetically modified organism, but not containing or consisting of a genetically modi-

***The draft leaves open what exactly is meant by 'adventitious' and what measures must be taken to avoid GMO contamination***

# ***FoE AND LOCAL FARMERS JOIN FORCES TO STOP GMO TRIALS***

fied organism". On the other hand, it could be argued that these enzymes are not actually foods. (With regard to 'food', the draft Regulation refers to the definition included in the European Food Authority Proposal according to which food has to be, inter alia, "intended to be, or expected to be ingested by humans"). Since most food enzymes are usually used as catalysts (i.e. they disappear after they convert one substance into another), they are usually not intended or expected to be ingested by humans. However, this interpretation would imply that food enzymes also fall outside the mandate of the European Food Authority which would not make a lot of sense. It could therefore be assumed that food enzymes produced from GMMs would be covered by the Regulation (even though this might not be the Commission's understanding).

**TIMING**

Even if the Commission manages to table its final proposal for this Regulation before the summer break of the EU institutions, it will probably be 2003 before the text of the Regulation has been amended and approved by the European Parliament and actually becomes law in the Member States.

Furthermore, there is still much debate and even controversy concerning the mandate and location of the future European Food Authority. The Commission's proposal to set up the agency is currently under debate in the European Parliament where Members have tabled hundreds of amendments concerning the role, composition, funding, and even the name of the EFA (MEPs prefer the name 'European Food Safety Authority). The EP will vote on

Friends of the Earth England/Wales/Northern Ireland has welcomed the abandonment of a controversial GMO trial site at Wolston, Warwickshire (UK). The site was two miles from one of Europe's foremost organic research centres, the Henry Doubleday Research Association. According to Pete Riley, GM campaigner at FoE: "We are delighted that the biotech industry has finally seen sense and agreed to abandon the GM trial site near this important organic centre. This is the first time that the government or biotech industry have ever listened to genuine concerns from the public. But communities up and down the country are still very worried about the impact of these crops on conventional and organic varieties. SCIMAC and the government must now review the entire GM farm scale trials programme."

During April, local people and farmers came together to support a rally in Wolston to demand that the government stop a proposed trial of genetically modified forage maize less than 2 miles from Ryton Organic Gardens, the long established headquarters of Henry Doubleday Research Association

(HDRA). The rally was organised by the local Friends of the Earth group to support Ryton Organic Gardens which may have lost their organic certification due to the proximity of the GMO trial.

The GM maize trial had been proposed less than two miles from the gardens, the long-established headquarters of the HDRA, which attracts thousands of visitors each year, and where HDRA conducts research for the government. A spokesman for the HDRA said that the association had not been consulted about the trial, and had first heard about it through the local radio station. "We will be contacting the DETR (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions), asking them to abandon the test site at the earliest opportunity, and are also considering legal action," he said.

The Henry Doubleday Research Association is Europe's largest organic organisation with an international membership. It researches and promotes organic gardening, farming and food, and plays an important role in conservation of old seed varieties.

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these amendments (co-decision procedure, first reading) during the second week of June.

Finally, there is a lot of discussion between some factions in Member States concerning where the EFA (or EFSA) should be located. Helsinki, Barcelona, Parma and Lille are all candidates. While Finland is pressing for an urgent decision on the location (citing that priority should be given to Member States which do not yet host any of the

EU institutions), Italy is objecting to the suggestion that the country chosen should be that with the least number of cases pending at the European Court of Justice.

The above seems certain to delay the date by which the Agency will actually be up and running. The Commission's original intention was for it to be operational by early 2002.

# EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN TO BAN "SUSPECT" GMO CROP

Friends of the Earth groups throughout Europe have called on EU governments to suspend the licence for a GMO crop which has been strongly criticised by independent scientists. For the first time, FoE has published evidence showing that chickens fed with the GM maize showed "suspicious" trends in growth and death rates. One scientist who gave evidence at a public hearing in the UK in which FoE opposed the seed listing for this GM maize variety concluded: "*As a scientist, I wouldn't drink milk from cows fed [this] GM maize with the present state of knowledge*".

The GM maize, called 'T25' and produced by the Franco-German biotech company Aventis, has been analysed by independent scientists in the UK after the British government tried in 2000 to approve it for commercial growing. The maize was granted EU approval against Directive 90/220/EEC in 1998 for cultivation and import. FoE groups around Europe are now demanding that this GM maize is banned.

During the public inquiry last year in the UK, independent experts examined the science behind Aventis T25 maize. The evidence presented revealed that the GM maize should never have been approved in the first place:

- Though the maize is intended to be fed to cattle, it has never been tested on cows. The only studies conducted by Aventis related to chickens and rats. A UK expert committee on animal feeds (the Interdepartmental Group on Novel Feed Developments, set up in the wake of the BSE crisis to advise on animal feed issues, criticised the safety evidence presented by Aventis and demanded test-

ing on cattle. Their advice was ignored.

- Significant compositional differences were found: levels of amino acid, fatty acid, fat, carbohydrate, protein and fibre content of T25 maize were significantly different from normal maize.
- The only experiment using whole T25 maize grains showed suspicious trends which were not further investigated: the 1996 feeding study of whole T25 maize grains to chickens. In this study, greater variations in weight and other measurements were recorded for chickens who were fed the GM grains compared with those fed the non-GM grains, and twice as many died (although this was not statistically significant). Scientists

commissioned by FoE analysed this research and concluded that it was not of a standard that would be acceptable for publication in a scientific journal. They reported that the trends for weight variations and higher mortality in the GM-fed birds were "suspicious" and were surprised that such a "*poor study should have been presented as evidence and accepted as evidence in the first place*."

- Professor Bob Orskov, OBE, Director of the International Feed Resource Unit in Aberdeen, believes that "*the scientific case put forward for this GM maize is not adequate*" and said that "*if the GM maize was approved for commercial growing ..... then people would be justified in turning their back on consuming milk derived from it*."



According to Friends of the Earth, the approval process for this GM maize reveals a shocking catalogue of poor science and the failure of the regulatory system to protect human and animal health, and the environment. The maize should never have got so far in the approval process. With the full facts in hand, Friends of the Earth is therefore urging EU governments to suspend Aventis T25 immediately.

The evidence published by FoE is available on the following web site:

[www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/food\\_and\\_biotechnology/information/gm\\_food/index.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/food_and_biotechnology/information/gm_food/index.html)

Transcripts of the public hearing are available at:

[www.maff.gov.uk/plant/pvs/chardon/index.htm](http://www.maff.gov.uk/plant/pvs/chardon/index.htm)

# GM FISH THE RISKIEST OF ALL EXPERIMENTS, SAYS FoE SCOTLAND

Friends of the Earth Scotland has responded angrily to the revelation that UK government has spent over £2.6 million funding the development of genetically modified (GM) fish for human consumption **with a further £457,000 having been spent in Britain** (including Scottish laboratories) **by the European Commission**. According to FoE Scotland's Chief Executive, Kevin Dunion: "The rapid rise of farmed fish production worldwide has resulted in increased environmental threats posed by the industry including nutrient pollution, toxic chemical discharges, habitat and resource degradation. The introduction of GM into fish farming industry can only increase these threats further.

"Our concerns surrounding GM fish are similar to those of GM crops", said Dunion. "However, farming GM fish is far riskier than GM crops because the GM fish can literally swim away. In Scotland we now know escapes of large numbers of conventionally farmed fish are a regular occurrence. Escapes of GM fish would have major damage on our already devastated wild fish stocks. On a global scale, because researchers cannot guarantee 100% sterility, escaped GM fish could crossbreed with natural stocks and no one knows what the ultimate consequence will be." In Scotland almost a million farmed fish have escaped from farms since 1997.

According to an article in the British newspaper "Independent on Sunday", current research includes:

- An £861,000 DFID project led by Stirling's institute of aquaculture, and the University of Wales, Swansea, to "genetically improve" carp.

- Research on carp, salmon, goldfish and zebra fish at Southampton, Edinburgh and Aberdeen universities.
- A MAFF project at Southampton to create disease resistance in zebra fish and tilapia.
- A £300,000 DFID project at Southampton to produce "improved reversibly sterile" tilapia.

**Escapes of GM fish would have major damage on our already devastated wild fish stocks**

## **"Whitehall funds hush-hush production of GM fish"**

by Severin Carrell and Geoffrey Lean, *Independent on Sunday*, (1.04.01)

Three government ministries are financing the development of genetically modified fish for the dinner table, *The Independent on Sunday* can reveal. They have already spent £2.6m on unpublicised British research to create fast-growing fish for human consumption despite warnings from official advisers that these will inevitably interbreed with wild species, with incalculable consequences. A further £457,000 has been spent by the European Commission in Britain.

The research focuses on fish such as carp and tilapia, a staple in Asia which is becoming increasingly popular in Britain. But the techniques will be soon applied to widely eaten species such as salmon and cod. The news comes at a time when consumers are increasingly turning to fish, as they become more anxious about the

safety of meat. The research is being partly financed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food - already under heavy attack for its bungling of the foot and mouth outbreak.

It has funded several projects to develop GM fish, but yesterday refused to answer detailed questions on its research despite repeated promises of openness by the minister, Nick Brown. The biggest spender is Clare Short's Department for International Development, which has given at least £2m to at least six projects to develop GM carp and tilapia in India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Africa.

Ms Short yesterday told the IoS that she wanted to help poor countries gain access to genetic technologies being exploited in the West. "It would be wrong to block research which might bring real benefits to the poor" she said. "It is not right for Western governments and pressure groups to decide for them."

The third ministry is the Department of Trade and Industry, which has spent at least £329,000 on research on carp, salmon, goldfish and zebra fish via the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. The EC has funded tilapia programmes at Southampton University.

The IoS revelation will cause a new storm over Britain's food. Alan Simpson, a senior Labour MP, said: "Ministers have failed to learn the lessons of BSE and foot and mouth."

A source close to the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, the official GM watchdog, said he was very concerned. "Releasing transgenic

*native specimens would tend to be very, very high risk. One can be absolutely certain that GM farmed salmon and trout put in sea cages would escape, and in large numbers."*

*Kevin Dunion, director of Friends of the Earth Scotland, added: "If these GM fish crossbreed with natural stocks, no one knows what the ultimate consequence will be" The research includes projects at Southampton and Stirling universities to create fast-growing strains of tilapia, based in part on controversial techniques developed by a US company to create GM salmon for fish farming. A/F Protein has applied for permission to market a salmon which grows four to six times faster than normal and claims to have orders for 15 million eggs of the modified fish.*

*The Southampton project has also involved trials of tilapia in Hungary. The fish are supposed to be sterilised to prevent breeding with their natural cousins, but Professor Neil Maclean admits that only 95 per cent were successfully neutered and that it was impossible to guarantee total sterility. But, he insisted: "Transgenic fish programmes will be a great improvement on the current exploitation of Atlantic salmon".*

## COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY

According to a report by Europe Information Service, the European Commission is preparing a Communication to be presented to the Council in the autumn which will outline progress made over the past six years on the regulatory front and put forward an action plan for improving the clarity and predictability of Community biotech policy. EIS says that the Commission's 'Communication on life sciences and biotechnology' will give a potted history and future perspectives of the expected impact of biotech innovation on the life sciences and EU companies in the world economy. It will analyse scientific, economic, regulatory, social and international progress and changes in the public view of biotechnology in recent years in order to draw the necessary lessons. The Commission recognises that it is unlikely to be able to reconcile widely divergent opinion in this area but feels that an effort should be made to meet one of the fundamental aims, of implementing and running mechanisms and structures to deal effectively with the difficult challenges ahead in order to avoid getting held back.

The Commission will draw up detailed, integrated action plans for Community action and initiatives based on open coordination and comparative evaluation of projects, which may include recommendations for interested parties and Member States. The integrated action plans are expected to cover:

- the regulatory framework and its application with the aim of guaranteeing that human health is not endangered, the environment is protected and consumers are kept well informed;
- research into biotechnology to support the EU industry and policies;
- industrial innovation and competitiveness;
- public perceptions, good governance and ethics (dealing with issues such as the benefits for society, ethical problems and 'functional' food);
- the EU's policy in a global framework (international governance, development policy, food safety, relations with trading partners and multilateral co-operation).

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