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**“IMPACT OF INFORMATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY
PERCEPTION BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS”**

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ABSTRACT

The potential economic and social benefits of modern biotechnology may not be realised if consumer perception issues are not adequately addressed. For that reason the adequate evaluation of social acceptance of biotechnology is becoming increasingly important in determining the future role of this technology. One of the main factors that can influence on consumers perception is the received information related to this topic, but non agreement in different studies is found about the impact of its knowledge.

Considering this, the objective of the present study was to evaluate the biotechnology perception of Spanish students from UCM, before and after receiving information during the two days Symposium “*Role of media press in public transgenic debate*” that was carried out on April, 2003.

The surveys were carried out along the first and second day, in order to observe their perception evolution. A total of 81 respondents completed both of the surveys. Results were analysed in order to obtain frequencies and the answer distribution of each variable of the questionnaire, applying SPSS 11.5 and SPAD programs.

The results showed that 91.4% of respondents knew what genetically modified food were, although 72.8% of them didn't considered they were enough informed. A 60.5% said to have heard or to know something about biotechnology. At the end of the congress, most express to have increased their knowledge about this topic.

Their main source of information for university students was the media press but their trustiest sources were scientific societies and medical sector. In opposition, the sources that they found less reliable were environmentalist organizations and farmers.

The first day a 43.2% thought that risks associated to genetically modified food were mainly allergies, decreasing this percentage to a 33% in the second day. Taking into account the benefits, the first day a 56.5% considered that genetically modified food had benefits, as a extending self-life and a higher quantity of nutritious compounds. The second day, after listening to the speakers, this percentage was increased until a 81.7%.

In conclusion, in this particular study, a positive impact of the information was observed along the two days, mainly in benefits/risks perception.