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“Measuring trust in food policy- developing an indicator for trust in biotechnological regulation”

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ABSTRACT

Regaining and increasing trust in food policy is a key priority of EU authorities after the BSE crisis and is remaining a high priority facing the new challenges due to the admission of genetically modified food.

At a multinational level it was recommended to separate the different tasks of Food Policy according to the concept of risk analysis: *risk assessment*, *risk management* and *risk communication* should be carried out by independent institutions (CODEX ALIMENTARIUS, 2003, § 10-31). The major reason is to facilitate a neutral and scientific risk assessment as well as a science based risk management both minimally influenced by political interests. The objective of this structure is to establish an efficient food policy framework and thereby trust in food policy. This approach is followed at the European Level what was initiated with the establishment of the European Food Safety Authority responsible for scientific assessment. The Commission remains involved in risk management only. The Member States reacted to the new structure at the European level in different ways: some countries, like Germany, copy the European Model, others, like the UK, still keep all three levels of risk analysis together.

Against this background the paper presents an empirical evaluation of consumers' trust in GMO Governance as a function of trust in the separate levels of the risk analysis process: scientific assessment, management and communication. A consumer survey will be carried out as case study for Germany with a scheduled sample of 400. The questions will be differentiated according to the levels of risk analysis. Given that trust is not observable, it will be estimated indirectly as perceived trust using a two level latent variable model (Jöreskog and Goldberger 1975). Trust in the three different elements of the risk analysis approach will be measured based on respective relevant variables deduced from previous research projects in different disciplines, among these are variables in general relevant for risk perception like controllability and specific parameters influencing institutional perception like accountability

and participation (Slovic 1993, Marris al. 2001, Henson et al. 2000, Kjaernes et al. 2004). Combining trust in these sublevels provides an indicator of overall trust in GMO governance. The approach includes sociodemographic characteristics of the consumers and allows to evaluate the significance of variables typically considered to influence trust.

In general, the paper provides empirical evidence to the evaluation of national food safety policies with respect to their impact on trust. This German pilot study will subsequently be expanded to perform international comparisons.

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