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Survey indicates change in public opinion

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Report Highlights:

Young Germans may be more open to agricultural biotechnology. This is one result of a survey conducted by the market research institution "Dimap" on behalf of the pro-biotech initiative "Forum Grüne Vernunft." The survey results counter generalizations made by biotech opponents that 80% of all Germans are against the use of genetically engineered plants (commonly called, 'GMOs'). The survey shows, however, that a majority of Germans still reject agricultural biotechnology but that public opinion may be slowly changing.

Survey Challenges View the Germans Uniformly Oppose GMOs

On July 29, 2013, a German-language survey titled, '[Gene Technology in Agriculture](#),' was made public by the market research institution "Dimap." The survey found that a majority of Germans are skeptical about agricultural biotechnology. However, the proportion of those who are more open-minded to agricultural biotechnology is highest between the ages of 18 and 29. 54% of this younger generation would let farmers in Germany decide whether or not to grow biotech crops (currently, even EU-approved biotech crops are banned by the German government). And 53% of this age group does not mind that 80% of food is in some way touched by the technology of genetic engineering. These relatively more positive attitudes among younger Germans could presage changes in broader public opinion.

Background

Forum Grüne Vernunft (roughly translated as the 'Platform for Green Rationality') was founded in 2009 with the aim to educate objectively about agricultural biotechnology and genetechology. Forum Grüne Vernunft claims to be non-partisan and members are drawn from several political parties and from science, industry and trade unions.

The following is drawn from longer German-language press release by "[Forum Grüne Vernunft](#)" published on July 29, 2013.

Agricultural Biotechnology: Is there an opinion change?

The younger generation in Germany is more open-minded towards agricultural biotechnology than the general population. A representative survey from the market research institution "Dimap" shows that people between the age of 18 and 29 are more liberal towards agricultural biotechnology than other age groups. Positive attitudes held by a majority of 18-29 year olds could indicate a future change in opinions among the broader population.

One of the first questions in the survey was "genetechology is the specific intervention into the genome, e.g. during the manufacturing of medicines or plant breeding. Do you think genetechology is useful or harmful?" While among the younger generation the majority is pro genetechology (47% useful, 37% harmful) the general population is more anti- genetechology (36% useful, 47% harmful). People with high school diploma are also pro biotechnology (47% useful, 41% harmful).

In terms of biotechnology in agriculture there is also more positive feedback from younger people compared to the general population. Even among the youth only 33% are for the use of genetic engineering in agriculture whereas 65% are against it. However, after learning that 10% of worldwide agricultural crop area is planted with genetically engineered crops, followed with the question of whether German farmers should have the free

choice to plant genetically engineered crops or not, 54% of youths said there should be farmer choice. 46% of youths were against farmer freedom of choice, compared to 62% for the general population.

The question of whether plant pest or diseases should be combated with chemical pesticides or genetically engineered crops was answered by 44% of the younger generation in favor of the genetically engineered versions whereas 38% favored chemical pesticides. The question “Are you aware of the fact that 80% of our groceries come into contact with biotechnology during the manufacturing process?” was confirmed by 36% and denied by 64%. The following question “does this disturb you or not” was answered ‘no’ by 53% of the younger generation. For the broader population, this statement bothers 69% of people whereas 28% are not concerned.

The survey that was conducted by “Dimap” and was authorized by “Forum Grüne Vernunft” (FGV). Given that anti biotech protesters frequently back up their argumentation by the broad generalization that 80% of the German population rejects genetic engineering, FGV had to show that this is not the case. “

[For detailed information about agricultural biotechnology policies in Germany, please GAIN report: [Germany Agricultural Biotechnology Annual 2013.](#)]