Regulating Emerging Risks

The case of nano-food applications and animal cloning in food production

Abstract

This presentation critically addresses the challenges of regulating emerging scientific and technological developments in the food safety sector, by focusing in particular on animal cloning in food production as well as on nanofood applications. After analyzing their unfinished regulatory frameworks, it frames the ongoing debate surrounding these controversial and innovative food technological developments. In so doing, it illustrates the limits of conventional risk analysis as well as the limited role played by scientific factors in managing the challenges raised by these new food technologies. Thus far, the attitude developed by the EU policy-makers has been different from the regulatory activism shown in the GM sector. Yet it remains to be seen whether this is merely due to the fear of killing innovation by nurturing a paralyzing narrative or whether it must be interpreted as an expression of a more humble, patient and holistic approach towards the regulation of food risks in Europe. The question is therefore whether these newly emerging risks will nudge the EU policy-making to shift its understanding of risk from a simplistic, narrow 'science-based' notion to a more inclusive, richer, yet inevitably contested, concept. It is predicted that, being destined to become salient within the public, the underlying hazards of both cloning and nano-food methodologies might carry the potential to lead the EU policy-makers to make such a quantum leap.

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