



Stakeholder opinions and attitudes towards co-existence

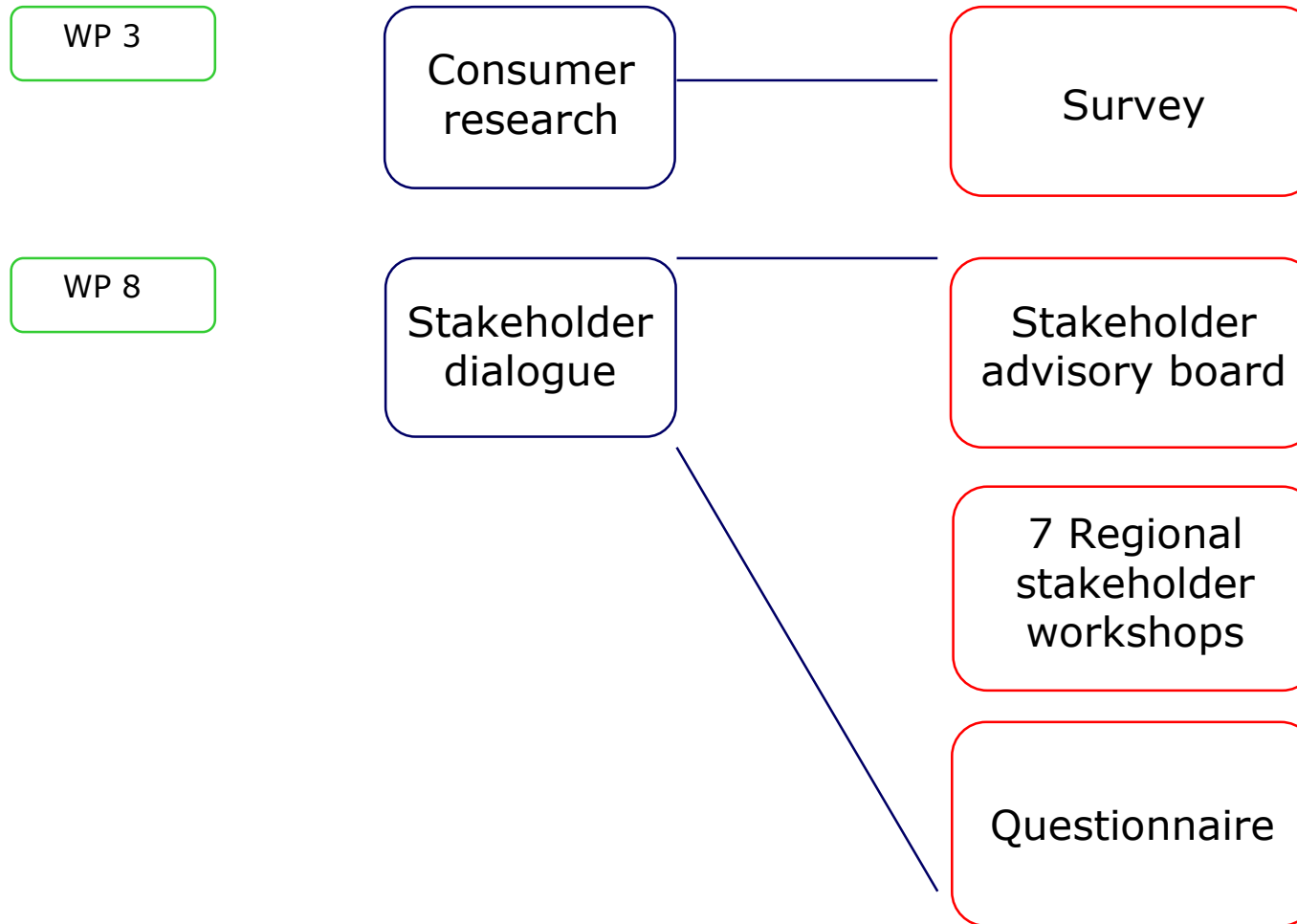
René Custers, VIB, Belgium



**Co-Extra International
Conference
2-5 June 2009 Paris**



About what people think, say and intend





The regional stakeholder workshops



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Regional stakeholder workshops

- ❖ 7 regional stakeholder workshops
 - ❖ England, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain
 - ❖ Period: January - September 2007
 - ❖ 21 to 49 participants, broad group of stakeholders
 - ❖ One common workshop set-up
 - ❖ Few general intros, break-out sessions
 - ❖ One common reporting framework
- > To enable the identification of commonalities and differences between countries





Main issues raised

- ❖ Labeling threshold for adventitious presence of GMOs in conventional and organic seed lots
 - ❖ A broad need felt to settle this once and for all

- ❖ Testing practicalities and requirements
 - ❖ Standardization of sampling
 - ❖ Testing on the field seen as labor intensive

- ❖ Costs and consumer aspects
 - ❖ Many stakeholders in many countries worry about the costs of co-existence





Main issues raised (continued)

- ❖ The definition of ‘adventitious and technically unavoidable’
 - ❖ Sparks disagreement between stakeholders
 - ❖ What should co-existence measures strive for?

- ❖ Non-authorized GMOs
 - ❖ Concern on how to deal with non-authorized GMOs, especially those that are not authorized anywhere

- ❖ Practical co-existence measures
 - ❖ Other measures than isolation distances





Main issues raised (continued 2)

- ❖ Responsibility and liability

- ❖ The smaller the scale of agriculture, the more farmers worry about this

- ❖ Compensation schemes

- ❖ Whom should contribute?

- ❖ Informing people about GMOs

- ❖ Need felt in Southern European countries





The policy context

- ❖ Is a determining factor in the discussion on co-existence
- ❖ The further the legal framework is developed, the more technical the discussions





The big common issues

- ❖ GMO labeling threshold for conventional and organic seed lots
- ❖ Call for further standardization of sampling and testing approaches and methodology
- ❖ A concern for the cost of co-existence
- ❖ A concern on how to deal with non-authorized events





Conclusions of stakeholder workshops

- ❖ Policy context important factor in type of discussions
- ❖ Clear commonalities between categories of stakeholders in different countries
- ❖ A split in vision between GM promoters and GM opponents





Recommendations

In the further development of co-existence, give the proper attention to:

- ❖ GM labeling threshold for conventional and organic seed lots
- ❖ The legal meaning of ‘adventitious and technically unavoidable’
- ❖ Monitoring the development of practical co-existence measures and compensation schemes, with an eye on harmonization and the prevention of competitive (dis)advantages for farmers
- ❖ How to deal with unauthorized events





Recommendations (2)

And give proper attention to:

- ❖ The development of harmonized testing schemes that avoid high costs
- ❖ The consumer perception of the concepts of ‘GM’, ‘GM free’, ‘non-GM’ in labeling, or the absence of labeling





The Co-Extra Questionnaire



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Methodological aspects

- ❖ Open access, web-based questionnaire
- ❖ 60 closed statements
- ❖ 5 point scale (strongly agree - strongly disagree)

- ❖ Disclaimer: outcomes only of a qualitative nature





Question categories

- ❖ General attitudes
- ❖ Impacts of co-existence
- ❖ Regulatory system
- ❖ Farmers and co-existence
- ❖ Food and co-existence
- ❖ Feed and co-existence





Profile of respondents

- ❖ 444 responses
- ❖ 343 with an identifiable stakeholder profile
- ❖ From > 20 countries
- ❖ FR, D, UK + BE, total > 70% of respondents





Stakeholder categories

	Stakeholder	Frequency	(%)
1	Agbiotech industry	23	6.7
2	Consumer	78	22.7
3	Farmer	67	19.5
4	Farmer organization	32	9.3
5	Feed manufacturer	6	1.7
6	Food manufacturer	10	2.9
7	Authority/politics	35	10.2
8	Ingredient manufacturer	6	1.7
9	NGO / pressure group	30	8.7
10	Non-industrial scientist	31	9.0
11	Organic farmer	6	1.7
12	Processor	3	0.9
13	Retailer	7	2.0
14	Wholesaler	9	2.6
		343	100.0





General attitudes towards biotechnology and GMOs

- ❖ Outcomes in line with most recent Eurobarometer survey





Level of Awareness & General Attitudes








	BE L	FR A	GER	NL	PO R	ES P	UK	N	S
Agro-Industry	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red
Consumers	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red
Farmers	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red
Food - Feed Industry	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Gov	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
NGO	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Green	Green	Yellow
Scientists	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow

	B E L	F R A	G E R	N L	P O R	E S P	U K	N	S
Agro-Industry	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Consumers	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Farmers	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Food - Feed Industry	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Gov	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red
NGO	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red
Scientists	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow





General Attitudes

ATTITUDE	+							
								
								
								
						N		
								
	-	S						
	- Awareness +							

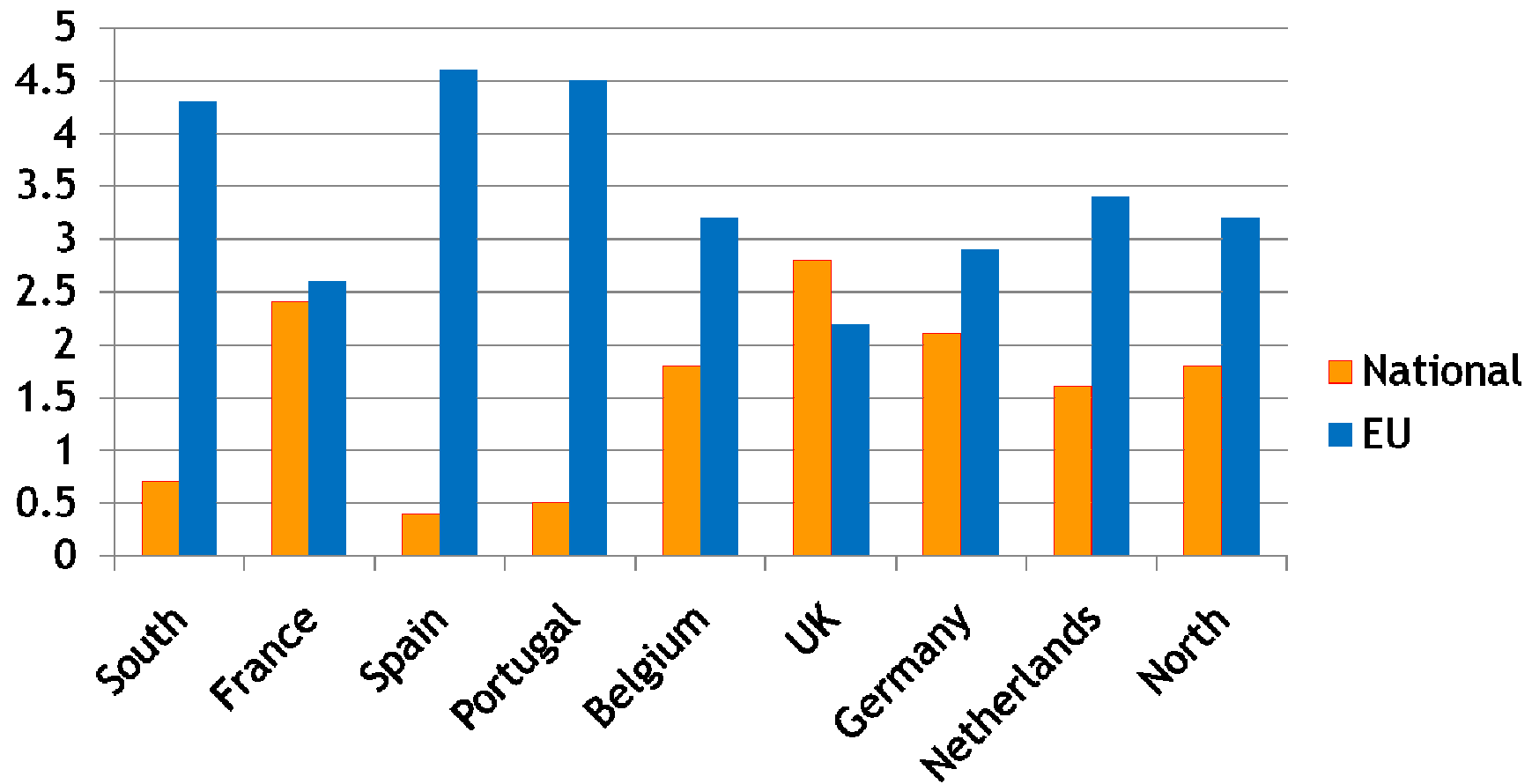
ATTITUDE	+							Agro
			Food					Scien
							Gov	
			Farm					
				Cons				
	-							NGO
	- Awareness +							





Level of Trust

Which Authority you would trust for regulating coexistence issues in your country?





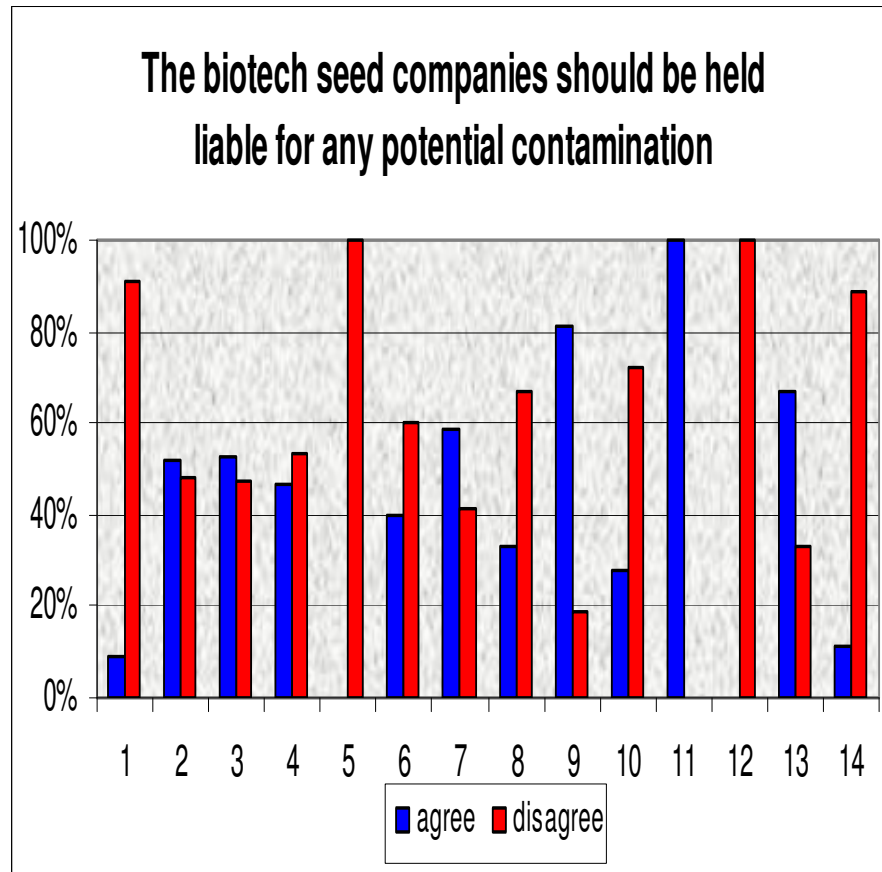
Groups of stakeholders with similar opinions

Group 1	More positive on GMOs	Biotech industry, non-industrial scientists, feed manufacturers, ingredient manufacturers, processors, wholesalers
Group 2	Neither positive nor negative	consumers, farmers, farmer organizations, food manufacturers, government / local authorities and retailers
Group 3	More negative on GMOs	Organic farmers and NGOs / pressure groups





Regulatory Issues



Tendency for strict regulation

Rational approach

Marginal criticism of labeling regulation

Regulation on a European level - homogeneity

Confusion in liability issues

GM free zones will provoke social & political conflicts





Comparison of countries

- ❖ There are no statistical differences between countries
(for statistical reasons only BE, FR, D, NL, PL, P, ESP and UK included)
- ❖ A farmer in the UK has similar opinions as a farmer in D or ESP
- ❖ Poland is an outlier
Almost all stakeholders have a more negative attitude towards GMOs and the different issues of co-existence





Discussion outcomes of questionnaire

- ❖ There is greater agreement on the issues of:
 - ❖ Labeling threshold for conventional and organic seeds
 - ❖ Costs
- ❖ Most stakeholders have the conviction that co-existence regimes will imply costs, and that these are likely to be passed on to consumers
- ❖ No real differences between countries (except Poland)
- ❖ Even though co-existence is an economic and a choice issue, some stakeholders perceive, present or use it as an environmental or social issue (especially those with a negative attitude towards GMOs) -> AFP





Coexistence Perception

	Safety Issue	Social Issue	Scientific Issue	Economical Issue	N/A
Agro-Biotech Industry	-	2%	11%	87%	-
Farmers	14%	25%	13%	18%	30%
Consumers	54%	18%	7%	6%	15%
NGO's	62%	14%	4%	10%	10%
Food - Feed Manuf.	22%	8%	21%	28%	21%
Government	8%	13%	10%	41%	28%
Scientists	13%	13%	29%	44%	1%





3 June 2009, AFP (Agence France-Presse)

“Genetically engineered crops and conventional crops would have to be grown in segregated areas to meet *environmental* concerns about transgenic farming in Europe, agricultural scientists said on Tuesday.”





Discussion of outcomes (2)

- ❖ Issue of GM free zones is hot, but outcomes seems to suggest that only a minority of stakeholders is in favor of promoting GM free zones
- ❖ Harmonization versus different approaches:
 - ❖ Differences and flexibility are OK, as long as they do not lead to unfair competition
- ❖ Farmers are inclined to see co-existence as yet another regulatory framework, that will increase the paperwork
- ❖ There seems to be support for the current labeling threshold, and also for not making a distinction between conventional and organic foods





Aknowledgement

Regional stakeholder workshops (WP8)

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Marie Cheneval, Adriant

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Co-Extra Questionnaire (WP8)

George Sakelaris, NHRF





How to proceed?

- ❖ The (regulatory) co-existence frameworks?
- ❖ Co-existence research?
- ❖ Practical co-existence?

