

Viewpoint: How the United Nations stifles biotechnology innovation

The political elites who advocate bigger and more intrusive government habitually try to use scientific literacy as a rhetorical cudgel to beat down the uncomprehending masses. In doing so, all too often they display their own ignorance. We were dumbstruck, for example, by this announcement from the United Nations:

To celebrate the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), part of UN Environment, is seeking articles on key issues of the Protocol, an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on biodiversity.

.... During the early 2000s, delegates to the U.N.- sponsored Convention on Biological Diversity negotiated a “biosafety protocol” to regulate the international movement of organisms genetically modified with the newest, most precise techniques, which they dubbed “living modified organisms,” or LMOs. The protocol is based on the bogus “precautionary principle,” which dictates that every new product or technology – including, in this case, an improvement over less-precise technologies – must be proven completely safe before it can be used.

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The U.N.’s precautionary principle-driven standards and regulations actually harm the environment and public health, stifling the development of environmentally friendly innovations that can increase agricultural productivity, help clean up toxic wastes, conserve water, supplant agricultural chemicals, and reduce the contamination of grain by fungal toxins But the regulatory regimes promoted by various U.N. agencies and programs deny less developed countries precisely the kinds of technologies they need.

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Rather than creating a uniform, predictable, and scientifically sound framework for effectively managing legitimate risks, the U.N.’s biosafety protocol established an amorphous global regulatory process that encourages overly risk-averse, incompetent, or corrupt regulators to hide behind the precautionary principle in delaying or denying approvals. It has become a self-defeating impediment to the development of new and better products.

Read full, original article: [The U.N. celebrates a regulatory debacle](#) (Behind Paywall)