Biotechnology and the White Paper (rev. Directive 90/220/EEC)

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The committee decided that only genetically modified organisms (GMO) which posed no danger to health of the environment should be placed on the market. When it came to GMO, the principle of precaution ("better safe than sorry") should apply. The committee is currently drawing up a list of measures which it wishes to be incorporated into the next Commission proposal on the revision of Directive 90/220/EEC on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms. The own initiative report on the subject by Mr David BOWE (PSE, UK) adopted by the committee included a request by the committee for standard classification of GMO at European level on the basis of the risks involved in each case. The committee also decided that the procedures for obtaining authorization to release GMO into the environment should be commensurate with the particular type of risk involved. The report called on the European Commission to consider how an ethical, economic and social dimension could be introduced into the decision-making procedures associated with the directive. In addition, the liability to compensate any person who sustains losses as the result of the release of GMO should rest with the persons responsible. All products containing GMO which were placed on the market under the terms of the directive should be labelled as such. A data base should be created, Member States should exchange information and increased importance should be attached to democratic responsibility, transparency and public consultation. The committee was opposed at this stage to any further simplification of the fast-track procedure currently provided for GMO which presented less of a risk.