Baptiste Saliba

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Term Paper

The Core Precautionary Principle

When Applied to GMOs

1. One very prominent environmental issue that has many people up in arms is the issue of GMOs (Genetically modified organisms) and whether they should be allowed. In this paper I will focused primarily on genetically modified foods and not genetically modified animals because that is another argument entirely. There are many arguments in support and against GMOs but among those arguments, there seem to be two that really stand out. In favor is the argument that GMOs allow the entire human population a much easier way to meet the global demand for food by providing us with crops that are more resistant to harsh weather, disease, animals, etc. The primary point against GMOs is that we have no idea as to what the possible side effects of these GMOs could be. Some people have even equated them to cigarettes due to the fact that in the past we thought that cigarettes were entirely healthy.
2. As I have shown in part a, this issue seems to be very decisive an there does not appear to be an easy decision that we can take. It seems that the best way to come to a decision would be to use the Core Precautionary Principle, a principle created by Gardiner. In order to apply this principle to any issue you must first ensure that three conditions are met. The first of these conditions is that these is that “The decision maker cannot be skeptical of probabilistic calculations.” In our case this means that the decision maker cannot ignore the possibility of GMOs having very negative impact on the health of it’s consumers, which I believe is a fair assumption thus fulfilling this condition. The second condition is that “Decision makers care relatively little for potential gain”. This condition is more difficult to fulfill because in our case the gains are quite substantial. However, if we view this from the possible outcomes one being that this may cause incredibly negative health risks which we hadn’t anticipated, to a large portion of the human population, or alternatively we would have to raise food prices substantially in order to incentivize farmers to produce more. Despite the low probability for the first outcome occurring, I think most people would still pick the latter of the two outcomes.

http://www.debatingeurope.eu/focus/arguments-gmos/#.WgjvixNSxE4