

The Import of Uncertainty

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that two domains of uncertainty should inform our strategies for making social policy on new genetic technologies. The first is biological complexity, which includes both unknown consequences on known variables and unknown unknowns. The second is value pluralism, which includes both moral conflict and moral pluralism. This framework is used to investigate policy on genetically modified food and suggests that adaptive management is required to track changes in biological knowledge of these interventions and that less simplistic, polemic representations of scientific knowledge are required to permit democratic decision making.

Keywords: genomics, policy, biological complexity, pluralism

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