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Bioethical assessment in the biosafety decision making process on GM crops' approval in Malaysia: An analysis of the biosafety act 2007

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Malaysian National Biosafety Board's (NBB) decision to approve the field testing of genetically modified (GM) mosquitoes; the most critical controversial issue is surroundings the scientific, social, ethical and legal issues. The approval was made based on the requirements under the Biosafety Act 2007 (the 2007 Act). However, there is one contentious issue: Is the Act adequately addresses socio economic consideration in the biosafety decision-making process on application for genetically modified organisms' (GMOs) approval? The objective of this paper is to explore the adequacy of the 2007 Act in balancing its roles in the biosafety decision-making process on application for GM crop's approval in Malaysia. It focuses on the analysis of the provisions of the Act as to whether it sufficiently highlights bioethical issues to be addressed in the biosafety decision-making process on application for GM crop's approval. In addition, this paper will study the extent to which the NBB in the performance of its functions and roles in the biosafety decision making process is conforming to the 2007 Act. Qualitative method using library based research and semi structured interviews was employed to response the above objective. The Act was developed wholesomely to regulate all GMOs to strike a balance between protecting environment and human health as well as promoting biotechnological development, however, the lack of clear definition and scope of bioethical issues in the Act could impede the implementation of the biosafety law in Malaysia. The paper concludes that the ambiguity of the provisions in the 2007 Act in governing bioethical issues, in balancing sustainable approach, in some ways might defeat its role which was originally intended to achieve.

Keywords: Biosafety; Bioethical issues; Adequateness; Application of the law; GM crops; Sustainability

Biography

Siti Hafsyah Idris has a Master Degree in Biosafety Law from University of Malaya, Malaysia. She is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. Currently, she is in her final year of Ph.D. study in the area of Biosafety Law specializing in Bioethics relating to GM Crops. She has published few papers in reputed journals and is serving as a reviewer board member of IEEE Conferences and indexed journals.