

## Conclusion

We have identified several key areas—agricultural research policy, production and marketing, consumer issues, environmental safety, and future world food demand—where agricultural biotechnology is dramatically changing the public policy agenda. The current situation is extremely fluid, with the day’s headlines, rather than the underlying issues, often dominating discussion. Public policy is made more difficult by the fact that, in essence, “agricultural biotechnology” encompasses multiple policy objectives targeted by multiple policy instruments.

For example, public research funding, the intellectual property regime, and antitrust policy particularly influence the speed and direction of agricultural research. Intellectual property policy and antitrust policy, as well as regulation, including the system of grades and stan-

dards for agricultural commodities, affect agricultural production and marketing. Regulation, along with public collection and dissemination of information on risk, plays a role in food safety and environmental issues.

Public policy becomes even more complicated when international jurisdictions are involved, whether the subject is U.S. exports of biotech crops to traditional markets, such as the EU, or the potential benefits and risks of biotechnology in developing countries. The development of appropriate policies requires the participation of all interested parties, including consumers, producers, agricultural input firms, firms at various points in the marketing channels, and government. Markets will indeed determine the future of agricultural biotechnology, but it is important to remember that these markets will always function in the context of the policy issues and policy alternatives discussed in this document.