

CSR in Agri-biotechnology: Managing a Highly Controversial Stakeholder Field

Réka Matolay

Assistant Professor

Corvinus University of Budapest

Institute of Business Economics, Department of Decision Sciences
Hungary

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This paper aims at exploring CSR and stakeholder management activities of agri-biotech corporations.

Developing and planting genetically modified (GM) seeds is a highly contested terrain, especially in Europe. Diverse understanding of and approaches to the consequences of agri-biotechnology have been highlighted by numerous and variant stakeholder groups. Despite of the EU acceptance of some GM seeds a couple of EU member states (e.g. Hungary) pursue moratorium (i.e. national ban) on the planting and cultivation of any GM plants.

Agri-biotech corporations have been working on the legitimization of their products for a long time utilizing a broad array of persuasion techniques, inter-mediators directed to a wide range of stakeholder groups. Lobbying, political communication have always been on the top of their agenda. CSR activities – e.g. CSR reporting – are only recent developments. Whether a new approach to stakeholders have been launched by agri-biotech corporations or the ever-existed persuasive communication is now ‘CSR-washed’? In this paper CSR and stakeholder management activities are analyzed with a special focus on the inclusion of stakeholders, the existence of two-(many-)way communication and dialogue. The research includes the international activities of biotech firms by looking at CSR reports, websites etc., and have a special glimpse on the Hungarian agri-biotech field where massive interviewing helped to explore the story and changes of stakeholder relations.

Address: H-1093 Budapest, Fővám tér 8., Hungary

E-mail: reka.matolay@uni-corvinus.hu

Tel: 36-1-4825554