Governing Agrobiotechnology in developing countries: the case of South-East Asia.

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For the last 15 years, the global production of genetically modified crops (GM crops) has been increasing at a quite fast pace, and so far, more than 95 percent of the area devoted to GM crops is located in four countries: United States, Brazil, Argentina and India.

In the same period, a growing movement of opposition against transgenic crops – mainly in Europe- started to take form, leading as consequence the development of a quite strict legislation and regulation on import and release of GM crops into the environment and on the market for food and feed uses. These restrictions and the lack of demand of these products caused a limitation of the expansion of agrobiotechnology in developing countries.

For several years, many Asian countries have been actively developing programs of research on agricultural biotechnology, focusing on GM crops with potentially beneficial agronomic traits; some of these countries have indeed developed biosafety regulatory frameworks, but until now only a few have approved one or more GM crops. The importance of agriculture for the economy of most Asian countries, anyway, cannot be underestimated and moves a huge part of research in this field – both in developed and in developing countries themselves. My thesis focuses on the situation and regulation of agrobiotechnology in developing countries, with a specific attention to a region that I consider very important for the challenges it is facing and the possibilities it is bringing to the rest of the world: South-East Asia.