

Agrobiotechnology in South-East Asian developing countries: Malaysia as case of study

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Agriculture is an essential element for the life and the economy of both developing and developed countries, and has been evolving quite fast in the last 50 years.

Biotechnology applied to agriculture – better known as agrobiotechnology – moves its first steps in the 1990s and since then has contributed to a huge increase in the global production of genetically modified crops all over the world. The pace of development is, however, strictly correlated with the economic situation of the country we are considering.

The biggest firms in the agricultural landscape had preferred to take advantage of the know-how of developed countries (mainly North American and Europe) to invest money and time in research and development of high-yield varieties of common staple grains (e.g. rice, wheat, corn) or improve the breeding techniques up to the genetic engineering technologies. Developing countries, on the other hand, experienced a very different situation: technology development such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, in fact, reached developing countries only with the Green Revolution and relatively recently the needs of these countries (e.g. overpopulation, with the subsequent need to increase food production) had upsurge to the attention of developed countries.

This talk will give an overview of Malaysia as example of South-East Asian developing country, and how it measures itself with the issues of agrobiotechnology and genetically modified plants.