

Informing Public Policy

IMPACTS OF CAST PUBLICATIONS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE AND FEDERAL AGENCY ACTIONS

SELECTED EXAMPLES*

Biotechnology

The Science and Regulation of Food from Genetically Engineered Animals (2011)



- In 2010, after nearly a decade of review and inquiry, the Food and Drug Administration issued a public report concluding that genetically modified salmon (AquAdvantage salmon) was as safe as other salmon.
- However, the FDA delayed publishing an environmental assessment, causing continuing debate among policymakers, legislators, and commercial producers.
- Senator Feinstein of California contacted Task Force Chair Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam requesting information to help her prepare a substantive briefing on the potential impacts of the AquaBounty salmon in California.
- This CAST Commentary provided sound scientific information to those involved in the discussions.

Food Safety

Food Safety and Fresh Produce: An Update (2009)



- “The Obama administration has made improving the food safety system a major domestic priority. In March, the administration created the food safety working group to make recommendations for upgrading America’s food safety system to the 21st century.
- In a succinct, authoritative manner, this CAST Commentary addresses the very same issues that are at the heart of the working group’s recommendations.
- This report makes a compelling case for creating a comprehensive farm-to-table food safety network.”

Senator Tom Harkin (May 2010)

Foodborne Pathogens: Risks and Consequences (1994)

Foodborne Pathogens: Review of Recommendations (1998)

- Responding to a noted change in public perception of food safety, including the legal responsibility and regulatory philosophy in the United States, CAST published this 1994 report, which was well received and widely quoted by the CDC and legislative sources.
- Subsequent interest and requests by government employees, producer organizations, scientists, and public interest groups led to an update of the 18 recommendations in 1998.

Good regulatory policy is based on science. CAST is a reliable source of scientific information on food and fiber, environmental, and other agricultural issues.

CAST has both a tremendous responsibility and opportunity to present unbiased, scientific data so that wise policy and legislation will be enacted. I have faith that correct decisions will be made if the facts are made known to the general public and to national and state legislative leaders.

Norman E. Borlaug (1973)

In the next 50 years we’re going to have to produce more food than we have in the last 10,000 years, and that is a daunting task. I therefore have called for a second “Green Revolution.” Now, more than ever, it is important for the general public and those in policymaking roles to know the facts underlying the many agricultural issues influencing daily life. CAST is uniquely qualified to provide this information.

Norman E. Borlaug (2009)

CAST's main goal is to provide timely, reliable, balanced scientific reports addressing all aspects of agriculture, without motive or agenda, to inform and educate agricultural decision makers, as well as the public and media.

I personally recall with great appreciation when CAST shed important light on a cancer scare involving bacon and other cured meats. The pork industry was panicked in 1978 when a food scientist at MIT published disturbing findings reporting that rats who were fed a lot of nitrates showed a major cancer risk.

CAST conducted an independent review. Ultimately after analysis and great deliberations, the federal government determined that the study was flawed and there was no basis to remove nitrate from foods.

CAST brought sound science to bear in a discussion with major repercussions for an entire industry and consumers.

Senator Charles Grassley (2011)

Animal Disease and Public Health

Global Risks of Infectious Animal Diseases (2005)
Avian Influenza: Human Pandemic Concerns (2006)
Avian Influenza: Trade Issues (2006)



- "I thank CAST for issuing a number of papers in this regard, including a global look at the economic, social, and political impacts of animal disease."
- "Science, of course, is at the core of our efforts to prepare for detection of the high-pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus in the United States. The council [CAST] has done some very extensive work on AI and, once again, we appreciate that."

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns speaking on agriculture's vulnerability from a natural disease outbreak (April 2006)

Environmental Policy

Impact of the Precautionary Principle on Feeding Current and Future Generations (2013)



- "Some European colleagues were saying how the CAST paper on the precautionary principle was having quite an impact in the European Union, and was--for example--introduced during a debate in the EU Parliament last week."

Dr. Gary Marchant, Professor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, Arizona State University, and Task Force Chair, CAST Issue Paper 52 (December 2013)

Food Processing and Public Health

Nitrite in Meat Curing: Risk and Benefits and others (1978–1980)

- Senator William Wampler of Virginia and other members of the House Committee on Agriculture requested that CAST provide a scientific assessment of the pros and cons of using nitrites/nitrates in foods.
- CAST prepared and published several reports. Using CAST material, the House Ag Committee held oversight hearings and invited CAST-sponsored scientists to testify before Congress.
- Based on data in the CAST publications, the USDA and FDA reached conclusions that there was no basis to initiate action to remove nitrite from foods at that time.

Animal Agriculture Legislation

Grazing on Public Lands (1996)

- Livestock grazing on public lands in the United States had come under increasing public scrutiny; concerns had been expressed that grazing caused diminished biodiversity, deteriorated range conditions, increased soil erosion and desertification, and decreased wildlife populations and habitat.
- The U.S. House of Representatives used this CAST Task Force Report in crafting legislation regarding this topic. The document was cited frequently in legislative discussions.



*It is not possible to conclude from these examples that certain policy decisions resulted directly from CAST publications; however, there is documented evidence that CAST publications have had impacts on government and federal agency discussions.