

***Politics of Framing in the GM  
Consensus Conference in Japan:  
How did the Public Frame the  
Issues of GM Crops ?***

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# Consensus Conference on GM crops (GMCs) in Japan

- From 15 September to 4 November, 2000
- held by STAFF (Society for Techno-innovation of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), entrusted by MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries).

# My presentation

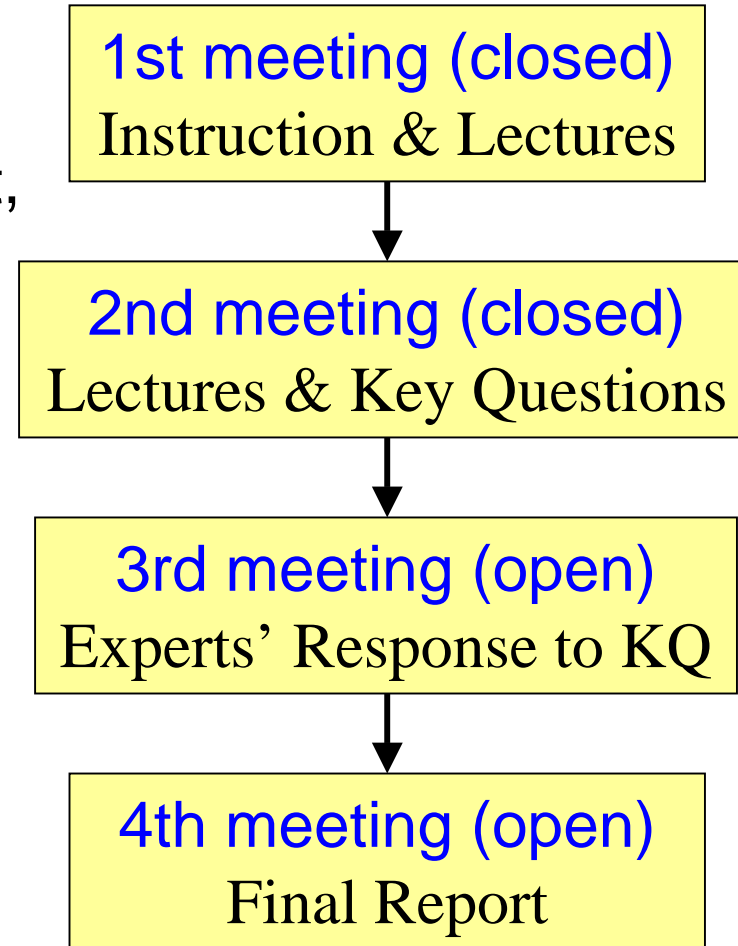
- 1. Facts of Consensus Conference on GM Crops (CCGMC) in 2000**
- 2. Characteristics of Framing of Citizen Panel**
- 3. Implication for design of “Public Space” for Participatory Technology Assessment (PTA)**

# Background of CCGMC in 2000

- **Planned**
  - by **AFFRC** (Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Research Council ) of MAFF
- **Subject: Benefits and Risks of GMCs**
- **Objectives**
  - To build **common understanding** of GMCs between public and experts
  - To implement **research based on citizens' proposals**, responding to public concerns

# Operation & Process of CCGMC

- **Steering Committee**
  - Chair: Yukio Wakamatsu (**STS**)
  - Social Scientist (**STS**), Biologist, Journalist, Consumer Advisor, Administrator (MAFF)
- **Facilitator**
  - Tadashi Kobayashi (**STS**)
- **Citizen Panel**
  - 18 out of 479 applicants
- **Wider range of Expertise**
  - invited based on citizen panel's "Key Questions"
- **Higher Transparency & Independence**



# Outcomes of CCGMC

## 1. New Research Programs

- Submission of a Note to MAFF & MHW
- Long-term Environment & Health Effects, Food Safety (allergenicity, etc), Monitoring

## 2. Wider Range of Framing made by Citizen Panel

- Beyond the original scope set by STAFF&MAFF

## 3. Acknowledgement of Social Science

- Social understanding of S&T issues

# **Range of Framing of Citizen Panel Topics of “Key Questions”**

- 1. GM Technology (GMT) as such**
- 2. Societal Benefits of GMT**
- 3. Environmental Risks of GMCs**
- 4. Health Risks of GMCs**
- 5. Institutional, Political & Ethical Issues**
- 6. Labelling**
- 7. GMCs for Japanese Agriculture**
- 8. International Affairs**
- 9. Access to Information**

# Characteristics of Citizens' Framing

1. Most concerned issue was the Meaning of GMCs in Japanese Agro-food system
2. Citizens favored Social Scientific view of risks & benefits of GMCs
  - Epistemological difference between Natural and Social scientists
3. Citizens' concerns for the risk of GMCs couldn't be characterized in terms of current paradigm of "Risk Analysis", left alone "Zero Risk"
  - Social risks, Uncertainty as ignorance (unknown unknown), Fallibility of human, Responsibility & Trustworthiness of Institutions, Meaning/Purpose, etc



# Other Findings of Citizen Panel's Argument

Citizens witnessed and learned about  
*“Science in Action”* (Latour, 1987)

- Science in making, in controversy
- Citizens were more sensitive to the difference in opinions among experts

An “Explanation” of objective facts

vs. “Claims” of conflicting and contested opinions

# Conclusion of Citizen's Report

.... We recognize that it is necessary for us to acquire the social scientific way of thinking about the risks and benefits ... in order to realized dialogue among government, corporations and publics. While we have learned at this conference that the tools for consensus making of society could be provided by social sciences, it seems that this recognition is not shared among wider public. The government should not only disclose and disseminate the information but also promote social scientific analyses of science and technology....

# Implication for Design of PTA

## 1. Framing and Participation:

- Wider Participation promotes Multiplication and Extension of Framing, and *vice versa*.

## 2. Role of Public in PTA

- Multiplication, Extension, Synthesis of Framing by Diverse Input of concerns, interests, values & knowledge

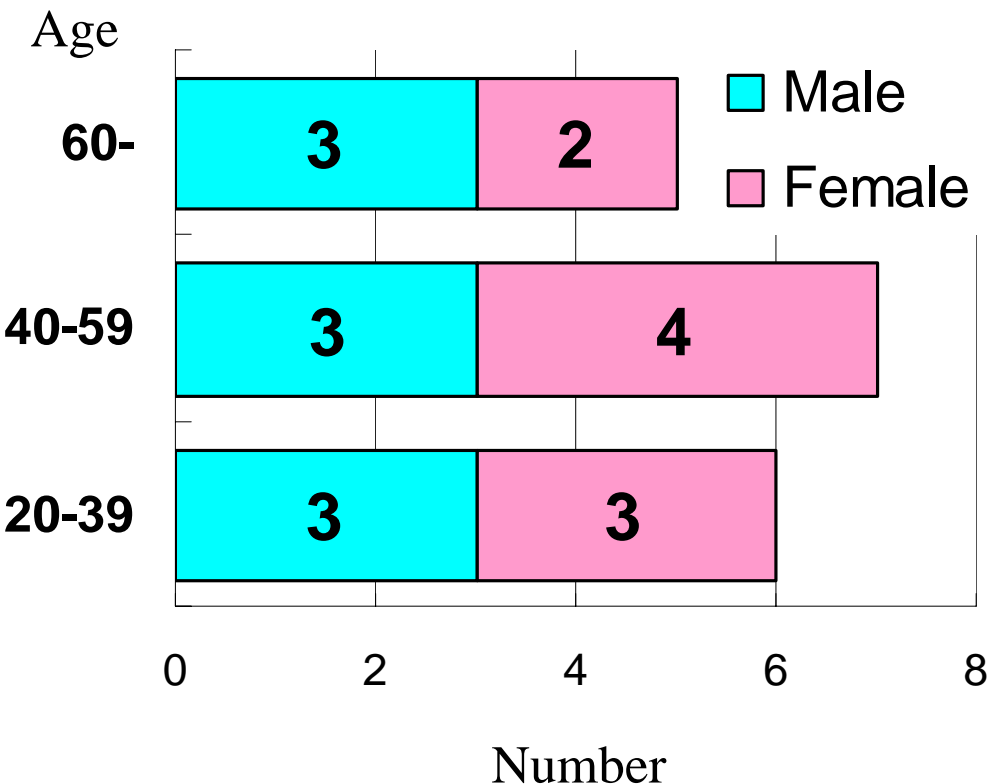
## 3. Function of “Public Space” for PTA

- “Dissensus making” leading to Multiplication of Framing, rather than consensus/decision making:
  - Enhancing “Cognitive Pluralism”
- Being more Open to Potential Uncertainty/Ignorance, as well as Dissent & Rectification

# Citizen Panelists of CCGMC

- 18 out of 479 applicants
- Selected demographically (age, sex, region)

## Background



Office worker	4
Housewife	4
Public servant	3
Agriculture/Farmer	2
Corporation staff	1
Medical doctor	1
Self-employed	1
Student	1
No occupation	1

# Applicants to CCGMC

- Invited by Advertisement (newspaper, www, etc)
- 479 applicants all around Japan

