

Sierra Club Policy on Biotechnology: General Statements of Principle

The Sierra Club urges full public disclosure, discussion and evaluation of the potential hazards, the potential benefits, and policy options for genetic engineering research and the development and use of products from that research. We urge the development of adequate regulatory, legislative, and other controls and that these decisions be based on a reverence for nature and life, as well as socioeconomic equity.

We call for acting in accordance with the Precautionary Principle, meaning that when an activity raises the possibility of serious or irreversible harm to the environment or living creatures, precautionary measures that prevent the possibility of harm shall be taken even if the causal line between the activity and the possible harm has not been proven.

In accordance with this Precautionary Principle, we call for a moratorium on the planting of all genetically engineered crops and the release of all GEOs into the environment, including those now approved. Releases should be delayed until extensive, rigorous research is done which determines the long-term environmental and health impacts of each GEO and there is public debate to ascertain the need for the use of each GEO intended for release into the environment.

We urge that where there are safer alternatives to the use of GEOs, these technologies should be given preference. For example, genetic engineering solutions should never be used to divert attention from the solutions to the problem of hunger that carry less biological risk (e.g., better distribution of food, land reform, sustainable soil conservation strategies, promotion of regional sustainability, reduced consumption of animal products, and stabilization of population).