GOLDILOCKS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Impact of the Precautionary Principle on Feeding Current and Future Generations

Washington, DC – June 20, For Immediate Release – Use of the precautionary principle and implications on the ability to feed current and future generations will be discussed at National C-FAR’s hill research seminar on Monday, June 24 at 10 am in 337 Russell Senate Office Building and again at noon in 1300 Longworth House Office Building on the House side. The featured speaker is Dr. Gary Marchant, Regents’ Professor of Law in the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University.

“The precautionary principle has failed as an overall risk management strategy,” says Marchant. “We need to find a better way if we are to feed a growing global population sustainably.”

Abstract: The CAST paper first looks at the history and purpose of the precautionary principle (PP) and then examines problems of ambiguity, arbitrary application, and bias against new technologies. Because the publication is especially focused on the need to feed a growing population, the case studies center on agricultural issues such as pesticide use, genetically modified foods, and food irradiation. The authors give examples of the PP’s failure to offer a credible and reasoned framework for the application of risk management. They describe inconsistencies and suggest that the PP will be increasingly controversial, marginalized, and ignored in the future. They acknowledge the importance of appropriate precaution and give credit to the general concept that sparked the PP, but they indicate that the PP itself has become unworkable and counterproductive. If it is applied in its more stringent formulations, the PP will suppress innovation, to the detriment of both the economy and human health. In many respects, the PP does more harm than good. Of course, commonsense safety practices are necessary, and these findings do not advocate reckless abandon. But the future involves a mission to feed “a population of 9.1 billion by 2050.” The PP has failed as an overall risk management strategy, and it is time to move past it.

Seminar presentations are available at http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp. The seminar is open to the public and the media.

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NATIONAL C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. National C-FAR’s Hill Seminar Series, now in its sixth year, regularly presents leading-edge researchers working to provide answers to pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. The Hill Seminar Series helps demonstrate the value of public investment in food and agricultural research—investment that returns 45 percent per year on average, and $20 in economic benefit from every $1 investment in food and ag research.

CAST is an international consortium of scientific and professional societies, companies, and nonprofit organizations. It assembles, interprets, and communicates credible science-based information regionally, nationally, and internationally to legislators, regulators, policymakers, the media, the private sector, and the public.

Go to http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp for more information about the seminar series and past topics. Interviews with National C-FAR President Chuck Conner are available by request. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com or (703) 509-4746.