

Part II

Analysis of Socio-Economic Considerations

Many countries have already included SECs assessments in their national biosafety frameworks, policies or regulations. However, there is very little understanding of all the implications resulting from the inclusion of SECs in biosafety and/or biotechnology decision-making. This lack of information on important aspects of SECs in biotechnology decision-making complicates the policy decision environment. While there is much discussion of the issue and has been some work by certain jurisdictions, there is a lack of information on the content (or meaning) of particular SECs, methodologies to measure SECs, including the advantages, disadvantages and costs of such methodologies, and the legal repercussions of including particular SECs in biotechnology regulation, such as compatibility with existing international agreements and institutions.

Perhaps the assessment of the broader group of concerns, the so-called SECs, could go so far as using a science-based assessment but at the least the assessment needs to be objectively measurable, evidence based and identifiable in advance. Literature about assessment of SECs already exists. However, as between different jurisdictions and even within the one jurisdiction, there is considerable uncertainty and inconsistency in the current approach to assessment of SECs. Content is also very dependent on context. Different countries and groups within countries (such as consumers, producers and industry) interpret and are impacted by any particular SEC in different ways. Impact differs because of factors such as different cultural and religious values and forms of agriculture practiced in particular countries. How a particular SEC is relevant to a specific country and what methodologies are appropriate in an assessment of that may also vary depending on, for example, whether the country is a developed, developing or least developed nation. This section is intended to assist in the move towards certainty and consistency.

Using a standard template, the chapters in this section provide an informative, factual and concise synthesis of 15 different SECs. Authors of the chapters in this section were tasked with identifying possible models that could be utilized to assess the various SECs and to then provide a summary of how the models are applied, and what data requirements are necessary. Some SECs methodologies are extremely challenging to identify, while others have several options.