to effectively ease public anxiety about bioengineered foods and forge an effective final policy. Michael Taylor, FDA's deputy commissioner for policy, insists that the agency is in this for the long haul. "The process will be an open one," says Taylor. "We are treating this review as the practical equivalent of a rulemaking procedure, and if we have to do rulemaking later to codify some of this as regulation, we're open to the possibility. There will be as much process as needed to get the policy right. We have to go a step at a time—in a way that is credible."

Frankenfood

The proof, of course, will be in the pudding. There are legitimate questions about areas of policy, including Section 409, in which FDA has left itself room to manuever, and industry can count on its critics to push aggressively for unambiguous answers, especially in an election year. If anything has become clear since FDA announced its new policy, it is that opposition to genetically engineered food has only grown stronger. Proliferating news reports on "Frankenfood," the popular nickname for bioengineered foods inspired by a letter to the editor in *The New York Times*, belies the wishful confidence of some biotech executives that the public is ready to dig in and chow down, no questions asked. Public anxiety and plain old distaste for the idea of genetically engineered food products have found wildfire expression in Jeremy Rifkin's Pure Food Campaign, which lately has signed up hundreds of restaurant chefs, reportedly including Wolfgang Puck of Hollywood's trendy Spago eatery, to declare their opposition to recombinant food products. Rifkin's campaign is reportedly bankrolled by his Foundation on Economic Trends (Washington, DC) to the tune of $1 million. Strategists for EDF and the National Wildlife Federation (Washington, DC) are weighing plans for future litigation, direct mail efforts, and legal challenges to FDA.

The smart money will bet on more to come. Last month an FDA official presiding over a Madison, WI, hearing on the new food policy was shouted down by a group of 30 or 40 angry people alerted to the occasion by the Pure Food Campaign, among others. It was the first such incident so far. "This is what FDA is going to run into," promises John Stauber, Rifkin's point man in the Midwest and the director of the campaign. "The bottom line for us is a vision of U.S. agriculture at odds with biotechnology. We don't need any of this stuff."

CUBE DISAPPEARS

EC SHAKE-UP

LONDON—The European Commission (EC, Brussels, Belgium) has dissolved its Concertation Unit for Biotechnology in Europe (CUBE), part of its Science, Research, and Development Directorate (DGXII). The move is part of the first phase of a far-reaching restructuring of the EC's research bureaucracy. CUBE, under the direction of Mark Cantley, was an influential body within the EC, one that had taken a broadly pro-science, pro-industry stance on issues such as patenting and bovine somatotrophin. CUBE also became the focus for antipathy—both from within and outside the EC—to the regulations imposed on genetically engineered products by EC's Environment Directorate (DGXI). Not surprisingly, there is a suggestion from several quarters that environmental interests could be behind the abolition of CUBE. One industry source sees the move as part of DGXI's attempt "to capture all of biotechnology." Other observers maintain that Italian Greens from the European Parliament (Strasbourg, France) persuaded Research and Development (R&D) Commissioner, Filippo Pandolfi, an Italian, to pull the plug on CUBE.

In principle, the need for CUBE to coordinate EC biotechnology policy should have disapeared with the creation of the Biotechnology Coordination Committee (BCC) in 1991. In practice, however, CUBE had become BCC's executive arm. At this point, it is far from clear—even within DGXII—what will happen to this and CUBE's other functions: concertation between EC and member states; monitoring biotechnology developments; encouraging the creation and growth of biotech firms; and increasing public understanding of biotechnology. Many CUBE and DGXII staff left for vacations not knowing what jobs would await them on their return.

Jean Lunel, chair of the European Secretariat of National Bioindustry Associations (ESNBA, Brussels), says that he would like to find out "why CUBE, which had been a success, has been destroyed." He has called for a meeting in Brussels to clarify whether CUBE's activities will be continued within the biotechnology division. If they are, then ESNBA will have "limited" concerns, he says, "but if the move represents a diminution in CUBE's activities, we will have something to say."

Representing large company interests, the Senior Advisory Group Biotechnology (SAGB, Brussels, Belgium), says that it has yet to reach a formal opinion on CUBE's disappearance, but its initial reaction is one of regret. SAGB's assistant director, Daniel Rahier, worried that CUBE's functions "may be less efficient" now that they have been absorbed by the biotechnology division.

The reorganization within EC's biology section may not mean major changes to biotechnology programs or policies. But the radical changes to EC's R&D policy announced in July will. EC now has increased budgets and a wider role in European research following the Treaty of European Union. As part of the rationalization of the R&D structure, EC's Pandolfi has started to merge DGXII and DGXIII (Information/Techology) by creating a joint administrative unit. The heads of the eleven divisions of the joint directorate will now report directly to Pandolfi.

Biotechnology policy in individual member states may also be influenced by a new permanent body comprising representatives of ministers—called for in the Treaty of European Unity—that will use EC's wider powers under the Maastricht agreement to coordinate R&D efforts of member states. The Maastricht agreement requires consistency between national R&D activities and those of EC. Coordination had previously been left to the good intentions of the member states.

The changes announced are only the beginning. Now that Jacques Delors is staying on as head of EC, he intends to push through greater reforms. He and Pandolfi want EC to concentrate on program development, while delegating implementation and control to others. To illustrate the extent to which the shape of European R&D might change, an EC spokesman speculates that, rather than the present system in which R&D is organized vertically, nation by nation, it could be organized horizontally, with programs like biotechnology run by a national body like the U.K. Medical Research Council (London). Alternatively, EC might create a biotechnological equivalent of the European Space Agency. Others think the present systems works well, citing the biotechnology division as an example. They fear EC's increased R&D budgets may incite national research bodies to claw back research money from the commission in the name of subsidiarity. Such a move could cause a renationalization of science that would lead to the loss of the valuable "European" culture accumulated within DGXII. **—Declan Butler**

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