where a simple statement such as 'may contain' in the shipment documentation without any reference to the identity of the GMO is insufficient. It does not preclude any final decision on this specific issue that will have to be taken at the next meeting of the parties to the protocol (MOP2). Along the same line, information on transformation event and risk class should not be provided with all samples shipped for research. For GMOs destined for contained use (which includes most research activities), such additional information would be provided only when appropriate, and, in some cases, would be limited to the availability of the information itself (e.g., risk classes apply only to pathogenic microorganisms).

The implementation of the Cartagena Protocol is a process that will build upon practical experience gained by governments and stakeholders. This is especially relevant for documentation requirements. Indeed, all users, in particular scientists and agricultural commodities operators, will be urged to report either to their national focal point for the Cartagena Protocol or to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on their practical experiences with the use of the tools developed by the MOP1, such as templates or the unique identification system. Such feedback will help guide future decision making.

Last but not least, as DeGreef recently emphasized in these columns, the scientific community will certainly gain from a stronger participation in the program of work of the Cartagena Protocol. This will ensure that their legitimate concerns are fully taken on board.

1. Cyranoski, D. *Nature* **428**, 6 (2004).
2. Cyranoski, D. *Nat. Biotechnol.* **22**, 372 (2004).

François Pythoud

Swiss National Focal Point for the Cartagena Protocol, Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape, 3003 Bern, Switzerland.
e-mail: francois.pythoud@buwal.admin.ch

Ethics, industry and 'animal farm'

To the editor:

The use of animal imagery ('porcine,' 'lapdog,' 'swill' and 'show dog') in Leigh Turner's commentary 'Bioethic$ Inc" in the August issue (*Nat. Biotechnol.* **22**, 947–948, 2004) adds a level of rhetoric that demeans the importance of the subject matter. More serious than the rhetoric, Turner makes a factual error by citing the Centre de recherche en droit public (CRDP) at the University of Montreal as a recipient of funding from corporate sponsors.

Corporate monies are not, and never have been, used as a source of funding for academic research at the CRDP. We accept corporate funding in only two situations. The first is for international conferences where such funds are earmarked for the high travel costs associated with bringing speakers to CRDP from around the world, including developing countries. The second is for the creation, maintenance and dissemination of HUMGEN, a free website which consists of a database of socio-ethical and legal policies and laws on human genetics.

HUMGEN (http://www.humgen.umontreal.ca/) provides access to policy documents (professional guidelines, ethical codes and legislation) related to human genetics, which are produced by governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including industry, professional associations and advocacy groups from over 30 countries. This site provides public-policy makers, scientists, legislators, corporations, ethics committee, mass media and citizens interested in ethical and socio-legal issues, free access to policy statements related to human genetics. It fosters informed decisions and increases sensitivity to the ideas and positions of other cultures.

This publicly accessible educational website is not marketed by the CRDP or the corporate sector, who figure in its list of sponsors. It is funded by a mixture of private, public and governmental agencies. There are no strings attached from any of our sponsors.

Being a publicly funded, educational and research institution, the CRDP created this website as a way of giving back to the community and making available its own research tool to everyone in French, English and in Spanish in 2005, funding permitting.

Denise Avard

Centre de recherche en droit public, Université de Montréal, 3101, chemin de la Tour, Montreal, Quebec H3T 1J7, Canada.
e-mail: denise.avard@umontreal.ca