

Rethinking Regulation

<http://www.steps-centre.org/ourresearch/regulation.html>

Research review - April 2010

2008: Field work

Our fieldwork activities over 2008 involved [partners in China and Argentina](#) conducting focus groups and in-depth interviews with farmers, patients, medical providers, seed distributors, and regulators in both countries. We covered both local and national levels, taking the Chaco in Argentina and Hubei and Shandong provinces in China as our case study localities.

This fieldwork revealed some of the dilemmas confronting local users of seeds and antibiotics, and the challenges of regulating these artefacts on the ground. Members of the STEPS team accompanied the partners in some of this fieldwork, and a number of [posts on the STEPS Centre](#) blog conveyed that experience.

2008: Workshops in China, Argentina

Towards the end of 2008, important national-level workshops were organised with policy-makers and regulators in China and Argentina.

- A workshop in Buenos Aires with representatives from regulators and seed firms discussed regulatory realities and possibilities for Bt cotton.
- In China, a busy week involved small workshops on seeds and antibiotics in one of our original study villages, before conveying some of their viewpoints at two [national level workshops](#) held in Beijing on 6th and 7th December. All workshops generated lively discussion and interest in following-up on our research.

Rethinking Regulation around antibiotics in rural China

- [Antibiotics workshop: photos](#) (Flickr)
- [Antibiotics workshop: report](#) (pdf, 580KB)
- [Beijing Normal University 'Rethinking Regulation around antibiotics in rural China' workshop publicity](#)

[“中国农村地区抗生素监管体系再思考”](#)



“Impacts of Agricultural Biotechnology Regulation on the Seed Market in China”
(STEPS/Zhongnan University of Economics and Law/CAS-CCAP workshop)

- [Seed workshop: report](#) (pdf, 850KB)

2008-9: International-level interviews

2009 saw us move from our studies at the local and national level fieldwork to interviews with international-level regulators and stakeholders.

During this time, we started to pull together our findings to present to a number of audiences around the world.

Paper on regulatory framings vs local reality

A paper bringing together our initial thoughts on the difference between regulatory framings of seed and drug use and local realities in both countries (China and Argentina) was prepared over the summer of 2008.

Adrian Ely presented the paper to an international Science & Technology Studies conference in Rotterdam in August 2008 (convened jointly by the [Society for Social Studies of Science](#) and the [European Association for the Study of Science and Technology](#)). Our Argentine partners presented the research to a Social Forum in Cordoba in November of that year.

Further presentations and revisions over 2009 included the [IHDP Open Meeting in Bonn in April](#), and a presentation by Adrian Ely to the international conference on [“Managing the social impacts of change from a risk perspective”](#) in Beijing in April. Paddy Van Zwanenberg presented to the [European Consortium for Political Research](#) in Potsdam, Germany in September 2009.

2010: Findings and briefings

We are continuing to write up our findings with partners through 2010. Our Argentinean partners have produced a [briefing paper on the cotton case in Chaco](#)

A critical issue in the months ahead will be ideas for rethinking regulation in response to the challenges identified by our research. This involves imaginative thinking beyond administrative capacity building to address the diversity of contexts in which international regulations are implemented. Our own thoughts in this area are still developing, and we look forward to engaging with stakeholders and other researchers on this topic.

On this issue, our Argentinean partners have, in conjunction with actors based in Chaco Province, developed several scenarios of how regulation, and policy more generally, might be rethought as regards to the seed case. Our Argentinean partners are currently organising a ‘designs’ consultation. This will culminate in a workshop in Buenos Aires in which we will explore the advantages, disadvantages, feasibility and implications of

different technological, socio-technical, and regulatory policy options (or pathways) of change. The fruits of all this effort will take the form of publications to be completed over the year, including a forthcoming book, “**Regulating Technology: Global Harmonisation and Local Realities**”, to be published by Earthscan.

We have also worked closely with our Argentinean partners to secure funding from IDRC for them to conduct a follow-on project in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. The project will be led by Valeria Arza at [Fundación Cenit](#) and involve STEPS in the study of the power relations and bargaining strategies available to poorer farmers in relation to accessing seeds.

Links

- [Our partners in China and Argentina](#)
- [Briefing paper: the cotton case in Chaco](#)
- [Beijing antibiotics workshop: photos](#) (Flickr)
- [Beijing antibiotics workshop: report](#) (pdf, 580KB)
- [Beijing seed workshop: report](#) (pdf, 850KB)
- [STEPS Centre blog: posts about the Rethinking Regulation project](#)