

Ethics and Attitudes Seminar  
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A discussion of ethics and attitudes bring out differences in how we as breeders relate to other members of our industry. As a prelude to the discussion, we asked breeders to fill out a questionnaire. Twenty-nine people responded.

Although we as breeders have much in common, we disagree on many issues, based on the responses.

I will be the first to admit that some of the questions were unclear or ambiguous, so the results are not always a true indication of attitudes. Nevertheless, the results are interesting:

- The majority (59%) think that public breeding programs should not be involved in patenting or PVPing germplasm, and that breeders should be allowed to use germplasm from public programs with no strings attached.
- A significant majority (78%) agrees that patenting, PVPing, and other Intellectual Property Protection will slow down progress in plant breeding.
- Regarding germplasm acquisition or scouting, 66% of respondents would take germplasm samples from crop production fields, 52% from farm advisor/extension trials, 52% from seed dealer's trials, 54% from grower's trial; 89% would not take samples from breeder's nurseries, 76% would not take samples from public breeder's trial, 93% would not take samples from seed production fields. We were almost evenly split (54 to 46%) on selecting selfs in a production seed lot.
- 60% feel that there is not a lack of genetic variability in adapted tomato germplasm, 60% feel that we do have the tools to measure variability; we are almost evenly split on the reliability of data from small plot trials.
- Regarding the future of tomato breeding and breeders, a significant majority (76%) feels that universities are not training enough breeders; 72% feel that consolidation will mean fewer jobs. The overwhelming majority feels that research in conventional breeding is being under funded because of diversion of funding to genomics and biotech.
- An overwhelming majority feels that GMOs or GEOs are not unsafe, and that biotech will provide some useful tools to breeders. Most (61%) feel that biotech has been drastically oversold, and will not replace conventional breeding. We are almost evenly split (55-45%) on whether biotech will be important in solving the food deficit in the Third World.

The hour ended with a discussion of the possibility of developing a "code of ethics" for tomato breeders. It was clear that it would be difficult to come up with a meaningful code that everyone could support. Such a code would have to resolve the conflict between what is "legal" and what is "moral" on ethical, and it was clear that that argument could continue until the next TBRT, without resolution.