The national debate on GMOs and the agro-food model for Italy

The background

- Italian GMO-free Coalition
- Presentation of the Agro-food Manifesto
- Preliminary discussion with other organisations
The Italian debate
The background/2

Prodi responds to the invitation to explicit the coalitions' position on GMOs, before 2006 national elections:

"The centre-left government has to (...) promote a great public debate enabling people to contribute on the issue"

Six months of negotiations.
The Prodi govt. fails to accomplish the promise.

The decision to go ahead as a civil society initiative
First meeting: 3 April
The Italian debate

The objectives

Main objective: social debate and positioning on GMOs and agro-food model

Target: a few million signatures/votes on a 'ballot paper' indicating people's preference on what they eat

Presentation of a political manifesto focusing on a medium term development: a mobilisation FOR a new agro-food model rather than (simply) AGAINST (GMOs)

Keywords:
• New agro-food system
• (Shared) Innovation
• Participation

The Italian debate

15 September – 15 November 2007

Great opportunity for:

• Citizens alphabetisation on biotech and agro-food system peculiarities
• Cultural advancement
• A season of participated democracy and social cohesion
• Reformulation of social and political representativeness

More than a referendum
The Italian debate
The organisational model

- **national promotional committee**, organisation leaders: contents, objectives, public relations;
- **national organizational committee**, organisation directors: documentation, financial management, press office, agenda of national and regional initiatives;
- **regional promotional committees**, regional chairpersons: coordination and conduct of the public debate at the territorial level, management of relationships with the Presidents of the Regions, (Regional Council declarations);
- **economic programming committee**, national directors and financial managers: preparation of the budget program for the new model. (This is intended to be a policy program within the framework of all national economic policy);
- **“innovation” committee**, directors and scientific heads: convergence of scientific research with production- and consumption choices for the country’s new agro-food model;
- **centralized secretariat**, small and basic, providing services to the national and territorial organizational “machinery”

The Italian debate
The organisational model/2

- Major national events (with European partners)
- Thematic meetings
- Local initiatives (the heart of the national debate: people and local authorities involvement)

- Meetings will be put on record
- Informatic tools for increased participation
- Rationale of the meetings: member organisations plan their own initiatives on behalf of the coalition
The Italian debate

The organisational model/3

• Informative package on biotech and agricultural & food-chain production

• Media work and testimonials

• Focus on academic and scientific arena

The Italian debate

The challenges

• Mainstream agriculture focus

• Organisational burden

• Real participation

• Constant public attention

• Institutions and political parties role

• European spread of the Italian experience