

## ***Impact of the Precautionary Principle on Feeding Current and Future Generations***

[Managing risks](#) has become a central focus of modern society.

- Successful management of risk presents difficult challenges and requires careful balance.
- Finding the balance between too little or too much precaution is the goal of effective risk management.

The European Union has been the [global leader](#) in adopting and promoting the precautionary principle (PP).

- The PP has been incorporated into more than 60 international environmental agreements.
- A small number of U.S. municipal governments have adopted the PP into their local laws.
- None of the legal adoptions of the PP include a specific definition of it.



Three case studies involving the application of the PP to [food-related risks](#) permit a real-world assessment of the pros and cons of the PP.

- Although the United States does not explicitly apply the PP in regulating pesticides, it does apply a precautionary approach.
- The selective application of the PP to look only at the potential risks presented by a new technology [transgenic crops] while not also looking at the existing risks lessened by that technology may result in decisions that do more harm than good to human health and the environment.
- Ionizing radiation that is used as a food-processing technology has benefits, but precautionary perceptions and policies have severely limited the contribution this can make to food security.

The PP does not, in its current form, provide a coherent, rational, and defensible basis for [risk management decisions](#).

- Without a workable definition and agreed-upon criteria for application, the PP's employment to date has been dictated more by political influences than scientific factors.
- The failure and decline of the PP does not mean that appropriate risk management is not essential.
- For the millions of people who are lacking adequate nutrition, the PP does more harm than good.

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