



BIOTECHNOLOGY

Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South) (Lab): The letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about consultation mentions co-existence, and I have no doubt that it will address issues relating to thresholds and separation distances. However, I am concerned that the letter makes no mention of liability. Given the biotechnology industry's central concern about not being held liable, can my hon. Friend the Minister give the House an assurance that liability will be at the centre of the discussions and that we will not end up with proposals that show that the greatest separation distance in our policy is that between contamination and those who should be held liable for it?

Mr. Morley: We have made it clear that we are responding to the recommendations of the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission on both co-existence and liability. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined that in a statement that she made to the House. In parallel with the consultation on co-existence, we are also consulting on the basis of the liability scheme, how it should work and who should be responsible.