Characteristics of Good Public Policy and Policy-Making

John Mugabe
Outline

• What is policy? and what is policy-making?
• Nature of science policy and policy for science
• Loci of biotechnology and biosafety policy-making
• Key features of good policy-making
What is policy?

• Public policy as a course of action(s); it is what a government decides to do or what NOT to do. Decisions on action and/or inaction are often articulated through executive statements or decrees, policy papers, written plans, administrative orders, etc.
What is policy-making?

- Policy-making is the process of setting the agenda, structuring a specific problem and adopting specific actions (incl. inactions) to solve the/a problem

- Often not formal and technical but political
Nature of science policy and policy for science

• Increasingly knowledge-intensive and multidisciplinary

• Growing complexity—many actors with many vested interests, many issues around any key policy issue

• Uncertainty—scanty information to better structure policy problems and articulate options
Loci of policy-making

• Diffused and spread across the institutional terrain
• Under constant change
• Often in competition for authority, autonomy, public resources, and even public recognition
• Under constant influence of different stakeholders (think tanks, companies, civil society, and others)
Features of good policy-making and good policy

• Policy-making as process or processes not isolated event. Policy as narratives.
• Knowledge-based (scientific evidence)
• Executive and political leadership
• Incremental or gradual (as opposed radical) approach, evolutionary based on learning
• Participatory, inclusive and local ownership
• Open, transparent and democratic
Features of good policy-making and good policy

• Non-linear not step-by-step approach from consultancy-workshop-preparation of cabinet memos-parliament

• Good policy regime—Intra-policy coherence and extra-regime coherence

• Good policy regime—must be consistent with the Supreme Law (Constitution) of the country or State and international agreements
Good policy

• Implementable using current or existing capacities (skills, institutions, infrastructure and finances)

• Time-based and should possess inbuilt mechanisms for self-termination or renewal