

Current Controversies in the Biological Sciences



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出版者:Mit Pr

出版时间:2007-3

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780262072809

In recent years, advances in biological science and technology have outpaced policymakers' attempts to deal with them. Current Controversies in the Biological Sciences examines the ways in which the federal government uses scientific

information in reaching policy decisions, providing case studies of the interactions between science and government on different biomedical, biological, and environmental issues. These case studies document a broad range of complex issues in science policy--from the Human Genome Project to tobacco regulation--and provide an accessible overview of both the science behind the issues and the policy-making process. The cases illustrate the different ways in which science and politics intersect in policy decisions, as well as the different forms policy itself may take--including not only regulatory action but the lack of regulation. Among the topics examined are public and private research funding, as seen in gene patenting; reluctance to regulate even when a product has been proven unhealthy, as in the case of tobacco; a comparison of U.S. and international policy responses to genetically modified organisms; and the competing interests at play in air pollution policy. Each chapter includes shorter side essays on related topics (for example, essays on issues raised by the SARS epidemic accompany the detailed case study of the public health response to the anthrax-laced mail received in the weeks after 9/11). This clear and readable introduction to controversial issues in the biological sciences will be a valuable resource for students of science policy and bioethics and for professionals in industry, government, and nongovernmental organizations who need background on emerging issues in the biological sciences.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Current Controversies in the Biological Sciences](#) [下载链接1](#)

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