



Nichols and Associates, Inc.

CASE TWO

MACC, an agrochemical company vs. The French Farmers

The Background

At great company expense, MACC developed a genetically engineered seed that was designed to resist disease, insects, molds and mites. Scientifically, it was a great step forward in seed development that would assure food for the entire world.

The French farmers responded, "NO!" They questioned whether seeds developed in a laboratory were safe? Who can say that they would not destroy the whole food chain? Who can assure the quality of the bread supply? Would you risk drinking wine made from genetically engineered grapes developed in a laboratory?

Since genetic seeds do not produce new seeds, customers must purchase new seeds annually from the company. This keeps them indebted to the company for the next year's seed.

The workers at MACC's southern U.S. plant responded, "So what!" and "Get over it!" to the concerns voiced by the French farmers. What can they do to us here in the U.S.? The French farmers threatened to strike and bring down the government; however, the French government agreed with the French farmers. The entire Euro-market supported the French and the deal for genetically engineered seeds was dead in the water.

Attempts by MACC to give the genetically engineered seeds to Third World countries were viewed as potential ethnic genocide. MACC's stock dropped dramatically and the pension funds of MACC workers in the southern U.S. plant evaporated before their eyes.

The marketing department did not do its homework. The idea that a new scientific development is sufficient to gain market share proved erroneous and costly.

The Intervention

Nichols and Associates, Inc. conducted an intervention to change the cultural climate to be a more culturally competent organization. A **cultural audit** was conducted to establish a baseline of conditions, attitudes and beliefs of the workers. This was followed by a series of one-day workshops to train the entire workforce (N=1,000) of the plant. A follow-up cultural climate audit was conducted to assess organizational change.

The Outcome

The post-audit showed significant improvement in attitudes, beliefs and practices regarding **cultural competence** in the workplace. Workers became more aware of their place and that of others (French farmers) in the global economy, its effect on their jobs and retirement funds.