The involvement of civil society in risk communication
DGOCETS (General Directorate for Collegial Bodies for Health Protection) of the Ministry of Health has the role of Reference Authority for EFSA in Italy. Covering this role, it acts with the contribution of the national Focal Point, established within the Italian Health Institute, and availing itself of the UVAC of Parma, as a territorial contact point.
The DGOCTS also coordinates the activities of the National Committee for Food Safety (CNSA), consisting of two sections:

**CNSA**

**Section I**

Food safety

Autonomous body, 13 experts appointed by the MoH, performing technical-scientific advice to risk managers (central and regional administrations) as for food safety in the context of multi-annual programming.

**Section II**

Advisory section for consumer associations and producers

Composed by Representatives of the MoH, Consumer and Producer Associations, Ministries of Economic Development, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and State-Regions Conference. Public institutions and associations address food safety issues, in order to facilitate the exchange of information and to increase the awareness and the ability of the citizens in view of a correct food supply and a conscious food consumption.
Within the Advisory Section in Sept. 2017 has been drawn up the guidance document:

"The risks in food safety: Why, how and what is important to communicate" launching the message "propose communication instead of following it" and preparing a risk communication plan "in peacetime" aimed to set up information activities for consumers and producers.

As far as the "how", the document highlights the need to strengthen and make the Ministry of Health Portal more "friendly"...

As far as the "what", issued a Questionnaire to the members of the Advisory Section to deepen the information needs of civil society as for risk communication in food safety.
Two recent initiatives by the DGCTOS:

**Survey for the Advisory Section of the CNSA Consumer and Producer Associations on Food Safety**

Aimed to:
1. develop the knowledge, expectations and methods of communication expressed by stakeholders through the perception of their representatives;
2. Identify the significant elements for the definition of possible areas of development for implementing effective risk communication initiatives and build “ad hoc” strategies based on the reference targets.

Training sessions targeted to central and local public Services dealing with food safety delivered by the use of different teaching methods, including: lectures given by journalists and communication experts, including an EFSA representative; a round table with the participation of representatives of consumer and producer associations and food bloggers; individual and group exercises.
Survey’s tool: questionnaire

Results Section 1
Risk communication: general considerations, value attributed to RCo

Risk communication...

...ensures an adequate and correct information to citizens

...makes possible the risk awareness and the implementation of effective food safety measures

...strengthen the FBO operators competitiveness

...favors the communication aspects that affect the food supply chain, production and food distribution

...protects the citizens/consumers’ health

...increases the confidence to the Institutions

...promotes consumer awareness which is crucial for risk management that, despite official controls, is never equal to 0
Survey’s tool: questionnaire

**Results Section 1: Risk communication**

**Citizens' attitude towards the RCo system in food safety, according to respondents**

- Citizens are interested in the process of communicating risk in food safety: 40%
- Citizens do not feel involved in the risk communication process in food safety: 35%
- Citizens are wary of communication from producers and the NHS: 10%
- Citizens feel involved in the process of communicating risk in food safety: 5%
- Citizens are not interested in the COR process: 0%
Survey’s tool: questionnaire

Results Section 2: Information tools

Information tools used by stakeholders

- TV broadcasts dedicated to health protection
- Online newspapers
- Newspapers
- Institutional Sites (Ministries, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, etc.)
- Industry magazines
- Generic social networks (eg Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- Internet and generic websites
- Blogs and specific forums
- Scientific publications
- Radio broadcasts dedicated to health protection
- Online industry magazines
### How to intercept the needs of stakeholders...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating institutional communication campaigns, thematic channels 'FOOD' that transmit documentaries or TV series focusing on priority themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating the comparison with ad hoc working groups for the themes of priority interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing the circularity of information between the various subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing to stimulate a confrontation and a transparent discussion as has happened so far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making programs in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By monitoring incorrect information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating forums activated on institutional sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting concrete and measurable objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamlining processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'DID YOU HAVE TO MANAGE FAKE NEWS'?

**HOW?**

- Spreading reliable and correct communications through the media: 30%
- Spreading reliable and correct communications through institutional sites: 20%
- Intervening straight on the authors: 20%
- By consultation of the experts: 10%
- Reports have been issued to the Antitrust Authority: 10%
- Fake news has been ignored: 10%
### How to monitor the goals?

- Testing first communication campaigns on a smaller sample to measure its effect and only then propose it to the general public.
- Involving and making the components more responsible.
- Stimulating a greater participation of consumer associations in communication campaigns.
- Structuring sample surveys to verify the effect of communication campaigns.
- Reformulating the objectives so that they can be measured through indicators.
- Considering the notifications on the national system of communicable diseases with food (FBD) in the monitoring system among the indicators.
- Reducing alarmist information on the media.
Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes to be explored</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer responsibility and critical capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability of the institutional system in the Risk communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific source of information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected results in the short and medium term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs to raise awareness in schools on food safety issues also in relation to food waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing associations and institutions of public awareness campaigns on food safety issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications (App) for smartphones dedicated to food safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboardings dedicated to food safety to be affixed to points of sale and supply of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spots on TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active participation of the components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for measurable objectives through indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration of synthetic and shared documents among the components</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thanks for the attention