

Communicating uncertainties in Scientific Assessments

Floriana Cimmarusti, Secretary General

SAFE - Safe Food Advocacy Europe

2nd EFSA Stakeholder Forum

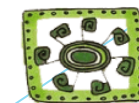
Tuesday 20 November 2018

Thon Hotel EU



SAFE - Identity and Mission

- ▶ SAFE is an independent non-profit organisation, which strives to protect and advance consumers' rights in EU food policy
- ▶ Main activities:
 - Lobbying to improve EU legislative framework
 - Raise public awareness and train consumers
 - SAFE has been awarded a LIFE Operating Grant 2018-2019
 - SAFE has been awarded an Erasmus + Grant for Strategic Partnership 2018
- ▶ SAFE Members are currently spread over 9 EU countries and collectively represent over 1,500,000 European consumers



Tobacco

TIME

prolonged study and evaluation," the 150,000-word report declared, "the committee makes the following judgment: Cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the U.S. to warrant appropriate remedial action." More significant than the words was their source: it was the

Source: TIME (1964), 'Smoking, The Government Report'; Chesterfield Advertisement.



NOW...Scientific Evidence on Effects of Smoking!

from various walks of life. 45 percent of this group have smoked Chesterfield for an average of over ten years.

After ten months, the medical specialist reports that he observed...

no adverse effects on the nose, throat and sinuses of the group from smoking Chesterfield.

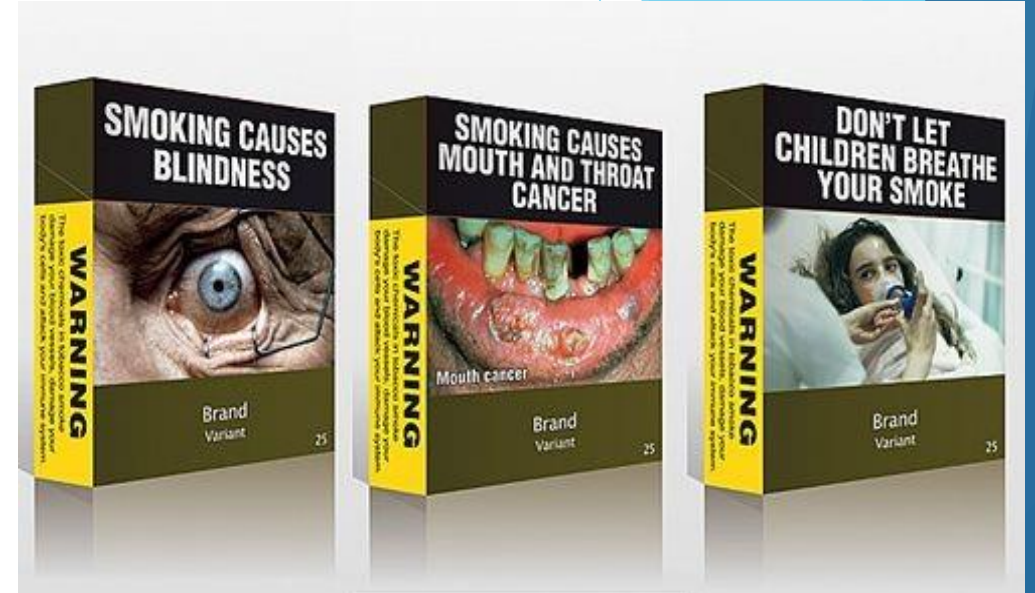
**MUCH Milder
CHESTERFIELD
IS BEST FOR YOU**

Tobacco

- ▶ Worldwide, approximately **3 million** die prematurely per year as a result of smoking

2001 Directive on Tobacco Products:

- ❑ Requires manufacturers to put health warnings on tobacco products
- ❑ Bans the use of terms such as ‘light’, ‘mild’ or ‘low tar’
- ❑ Forces producers to provide full information on all ingredients utilised in their products
- ❑ Sets maximum limits for tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarettes



Sources: R. Peto, A. Lopez, J. Boreham et al. Mortality from Smoking in Developed Countries 1950-2000, Oxford, ICRF; WHO. OUP, 1994. Updated 1997; EU Commission (2009), 'Tobacco Control in the EU'.

Glyphosate



NEWS

Weedkiller cancer ruling: What do we know about glyphosate?

In 2015 the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the World Health Organization's cancer agency, concluded that it was "probably carcinogenic to humans".

Sources: BBC News (2018), "Weedkiller cancer ruling: What do we know about glyphosate?"; Kevin Folta, EXPRESS (2018), "UK taxpayers face 228M bill if EU bans weedkiller-despite insisting it's SAFE", Ida Akerstedt.



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UK taxpayers face £228M bill if EU bans weedkiller - despite experts insisting it's SAFE

Professor John Moverley OBE, chairman of the Amenity Forum, said: "Weed killers used in the amenity sector have been proven time and time again to be safe - no less than 28 independent global regulators and thousands of scientific studies over 40 years back this up."



Glyphosate

- ▶ Dewayne Johnson case was the first lawsuit to go to trial alleging glyphosate causes cancer. Monsanto/Bayer ordered to pay 289 million dollars.
- ▶ More than 9,200 similar lawsuits across the United States.
- ▶ In France, there are more than 60 lawsuits alleging that glyphosate causes serious health issues.

Sugar

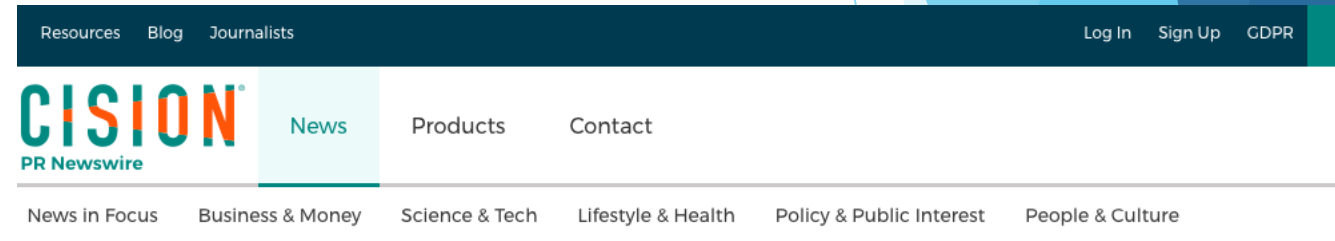


THE BLOG

Sugar Kills! How Do We Decrease Consumption?



Source: HuffPost Contributor Platform (2014), "Sugar Kills! How Do We Decrease Consumption?"



New Study Shows Children and Adolescents Who Eat Candy Are Less Overweight or Obese

Source: CISION PR Newswire (2011), "New Study Shows Children and Adolescents Who Eat Candy Are Less Overweight or Obese"

Sugar

- ▶ Worldwide **obesity** has nearly tripled since 1975
- ▶ Absolute number of **diabetics** in the EU will rise from approximately 33 million in 2010 to 38 million in 2030

Conclusion: Incomplete/confusing information and **biased communication of uncertainty**
→ serious **consequences** for consumers.



Sources: World Health Organisation (2018), 'Obesity and Overweight Factsheet'; International Diabetes Federation (IDF)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **Uncertainty should never serve as an excuse to delay action in policy-making** → Precautionary principle
- ▶ If no policy action is taken, consumers must be adequately informed to make fully conscious decisions

*In a survey of 2,000 consumers in the UK, US, Spain and Australia, **79%** said they find messages surrounding health, food and nutrition confusing*

Therefore, uncertainty communication requires:

- ▶ **Full transparency**
- ▶ **Availability & appropriateness for target audience**
- ▶ **Accuracy regarding level of uncertainty**

Sources: New Nutrition Business (2018), 'PRESS RELEASE: Consumers are confused about food and health'



Thank you for your attention!

Floriana Cimmarusti, Secretary General

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