

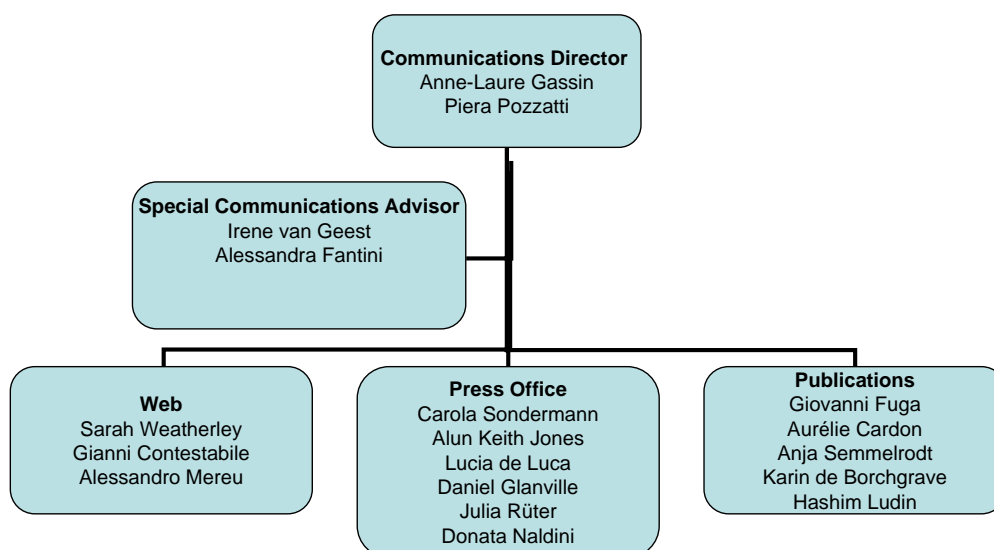
EFSA Risk Communications and Plans

Anne-Laure Gassin
Communications Director, EFSA

Agenda

- Risk Communications Strategy, Plans and Achievements to date
- Case study: aspartame
- EFSA evaluation: future perspectives regarding communications

EFSA Communications Department



Risk Communications

Purpose:

Provide appropriate, consistent, accurate and timely communications on food safety issues, to all stakeholders and the public at large, based on the Authority's risk assessments and scientific expertise.

Objectives

- Establish EFSA as an expert and trusted source of information on food and feed safety issues (within RA mandate).
- Promote EFSA's key values: scientific excellence, independence, openness and transparency.
- Ensure that messages are relevant, understandable and address food safety concerns.
- Enhance the coherence of information on food safety matters across the Community.

Overall Strategic Approach

- Understand consumer and public perception of food and food safety risks.
- Bridge the gap between science and the consumer.
- Harness support of key actors to reach consumers with pertinent and effective messages.
- Promote coherent risk communications across the Risk Assessment/Risk Management interface.

Risk perceptions Top Concerns

Question: For each of the following issues, please tell me if you are very worried, fairly worried, not very worried or not at all worried by it?

Answers: *WORRIED*

PESTICIDES: Greece, Italy, Hungary, France, Portugal, Slovenia, Germany, Spain, Finland

CONTAMINATION BY BACTERIA: Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Slovakia

NEW VIRUSES LIKE AVIAN INFLUENZA: Malta, Latvia, The Netherlands

POLLUTANTS LIKE MERCURY OR DIOXINS: Belgium

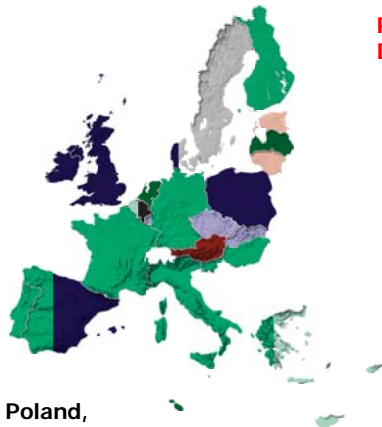
RESIDUES IN MEAT: Cyprus, Greece, Belgium

GMOs: Austria

ADDITIVES: Lithuania, Estonia

FOOD HYGIENE OUTSIDE HOME: Poland, United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Spain

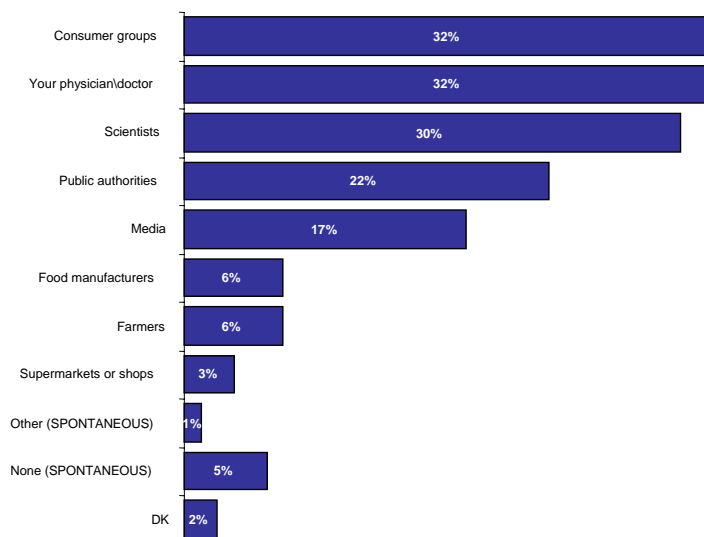
WELFARE OF FARMED ANIMALS: Denmark, Sweden



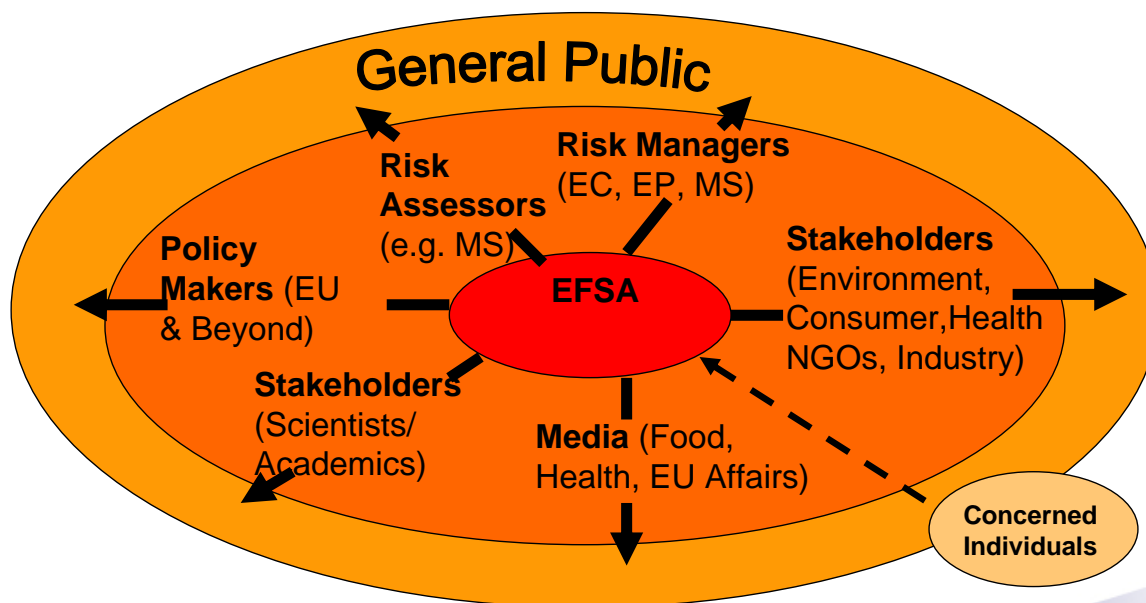
Sources of Information

Preferred sources

Question: Suppose a serious food risk were found in fish or chicken. Who would you trust the most to inform you about this risk?



Who does EFSA communicate to?



Defining a Communications Strategy: key considerations

- Scientific significance of the risk assessment findings
- Nature of the risk (emerging, possible, identified and confirmed)
- Potential public health impact, taking into account exposure of vulnerable groups
- Public perception and anticipated reactions
- Legislative and market contexts, as appropriate

Tailor Communications approach to information needs

- All opinions published on the EFSA website
- Explanatory/web context notes
- Web “news stories”
- Publications (eg *EFSA News*)
- Press statements/releases for “sensitive” opinions
- Press briefings for “highly sensitive” opinions

11

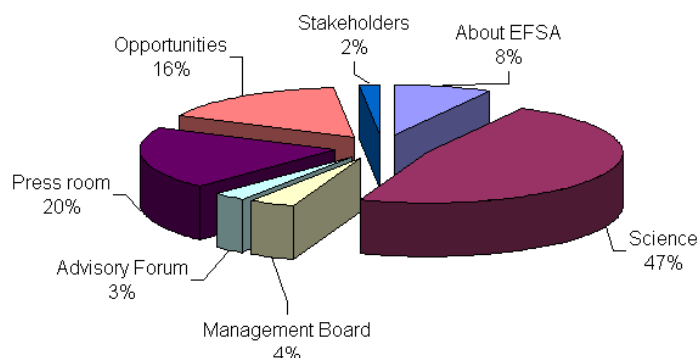
Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Communications Channels and Tools: «Influencing the influencers»

1. **Website** - Europe-wide reference service on food and feed safety
- 100.000 visits per month/ 10.000 subscribers to *EFSA Highlights*

Visits to website sections
First half 2006

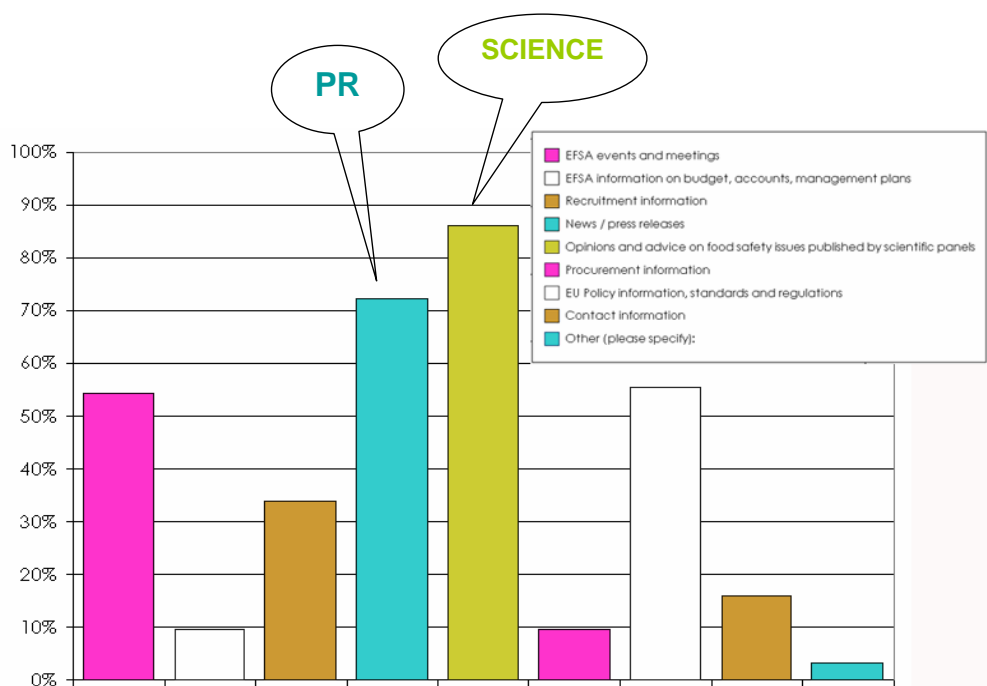


12

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Our users agree! – web survey results

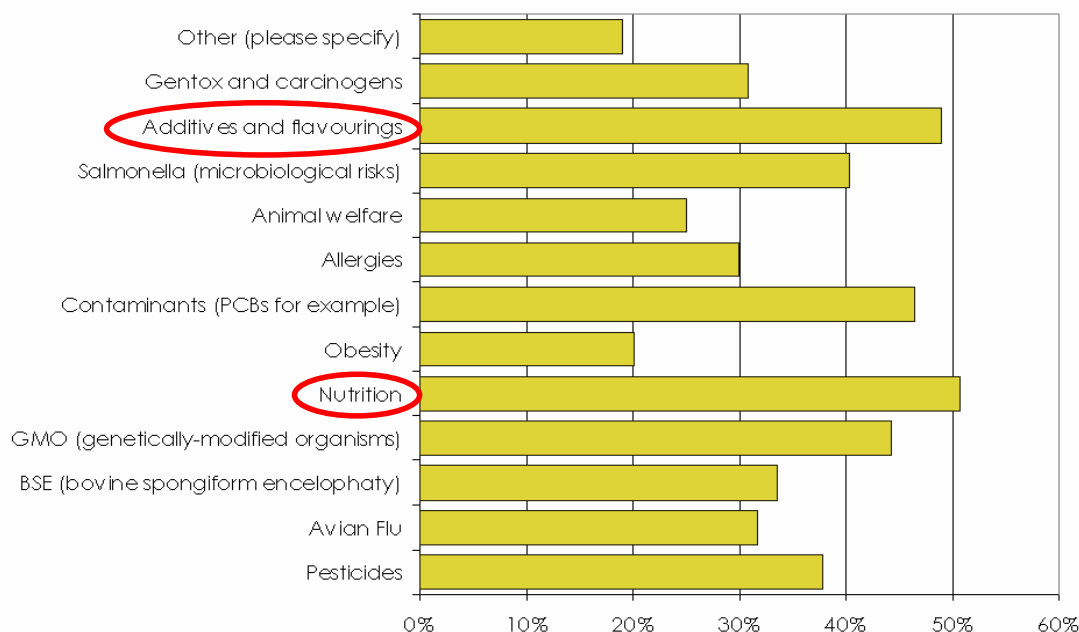


13

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Topics of interest - web survey results



14

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Communications Channels and Tools: «Influencing the influencers»

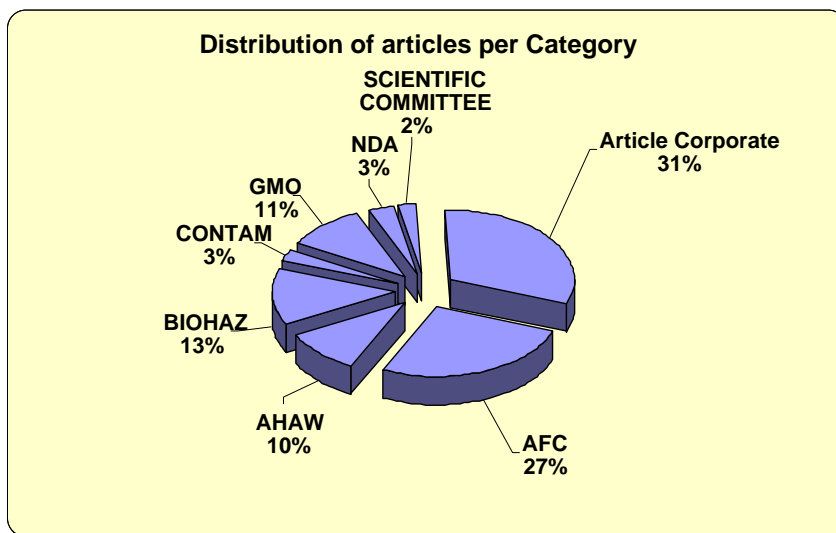
2. Press and Media – key intermediary with consumers on food safety issues:

-46 press releases in 2005 (+ 37% vs 2004)

- 4-fold increase in publicity (> 1300 articles)

-over 100 media enquiries on one press issue alone

- comprehensive database of food and consumer safety journalists



15

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

2005 Headlines

Irish Examiner.com

Goat had 'Mad Cow Disease'

Keine rohen Eier mehr essen!

Vorsorge der EU-Lebensmittelsicherheit wegen der Vogelgrippe

The Food & Drink Innovation Network

Europe calls for new risk assessment method



EFSA sets guidelines to minimise risk of bird flu in poultry

TETRA PAK L'Agenzia europea per la sicurezza alimentare ha espresso un parere autorevole ma che non elimina le perplessità
«Quelle quantità di ltx non sono pericolose per la salute»
La multinazionale: «Per stampare i contenitori in Italia useremo un sistema differente»
 «L'European Food Safety Agency» sulla questione degli imballaggi ltx, ha risposto alla conclusione che la sostanza non costituisce causa di preoccupazione per la salute al livello riscontrato. Questa tranquillizzante valutazione, diffusa il 2 dicembre, è da ritenersi la prima in materia di ltx, prima prevista per marzo 2006. Transnazionale, almeno secondo la Tetra Pak Italia, che ieri ha diffuso una nota in cui afferma che l'Efsa e la posizione assunta dalla Commissione Europea il 20 novembre siano un'importante conferma alle valutazioni da noi svolte ed ai conseguenti comportamenti adottati nel rispetto delle richieste e delle sensibilità espresse dalle Autorità italiane ed europee.
 «Siamo rassicurati da questo pronunciamento», dice Roberto Marzocchi, amministratore delegato della Tetra Pak Italia, che conferma comunque la propria decisione di non utilizzare più, per i clienti italiani, il sistema di stampa offset ltx con ltx che rappresentava in ogni caso, precisa, una piccola percentuale dei propri prodotti. «Sappiamo che l'Autorità europea ha compiuto un grande sforzo, nell'interesse dei consumatori, per dare una risposta a questo problema in via prioritaria e di questo siamo grati», dice Roberto Marzocchi. «Saremo lieti di Tetra Pak Italia».
 «Come dire: fate bere il latte off ltx ai vostri bebè perché non fa male». Le parole i padri italiani daranno forza al consiglio della multinazionale?

L'INFORMAZIONE
DI PARMA

CAMPAGNA AMICA

E la mucca pazza inglese salvò quella italiana

16

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Communications Channels and Tools: «Influencing the influencers»

3. Member State and Stakeholder networks

(i) Advisory Forum (representatives of 25 MS)

(ii) Advisory Forum Working Group Communications
(Heads of Communications – MS)

(iii) Pre-notification under embargo of draft press
releases to Commission, MS authorities and stakeholders

(iv) Stakeholder Relations/Stakeholder Consultative
Platform

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

17

European Food Safety Authority

EFSA Risk Communications in practice:

Aspartame

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

18

European Food Safety Authority

Aspartame: History

Authorisation

- Aspartame used as sweetener in foods and table-top sweetener for > 20 years.
- In the 1980s: authorised for use by several European Member States
- 1994: harmonisation of EU legislation relative to its use in foodstuffs – approved for use throughout EU following safety evaluations

Aspartame: History

Safety Evaluations

- 1970s-1980s: extensive testing in animals and human studies evaluated by regulatory bodies worldwide
 - 1984, 1988, 1997: by the SCF
 - 2002: review of all original and more recent data by the SCF/reconfirmed safety
 - 2005: new study carried out by the European Ramazzini Foundation
- ⇒ Possible carcinogenicity of aspartame?

Overview of activities related to the new study

June 2005:

- Ramazzini scientists inform EFSA about the new findings, then FDA and other US institutes
- EFSA requests the full data for assessment

July 2005:

- EU Commission asks EFSA to review aspartame
- EFSA informs its Advisory Forum on new study and asks to share relevant data

Overview of activities related to the new study

14 July 2005

- Ramazzini Foundation informs the public (press conference/ press release)
- EFSA issues press release the same day:
 - Safety evaluation to be launched pending receipt of data
 - No basis for recommending dietary change re aspartame based on current knowledge

Overview of activities related to the new study

September 2005

- Publication of preliminary results in the Foundation's own "European Journal of Oncology"
- Presentation of the study and findings at a scientific conference 18-20 Sept in Bologna

Overview of activities related to the new study

November-December 2005

- EFSA press release on 29 November reiterating request for primary data from the Ramazzini Foundation
- EFSA press release on 19 December announcing receipt of further data and start of evaluation (3-5 months required)

Overview of activities related to the new study

May 2006

- 3 May 06: AFC Panel adopts opinion on evaluation of Ramazzini Foundation study on aspartame
- 5 May 06: EFSA press release reconfirming safety of aspartame
 - No need to further review safety (SCF, 2002) or revise previous ADI (40 mg/kg bw)
- EFSA press conference in Rome with President of Ramazzini Foundation

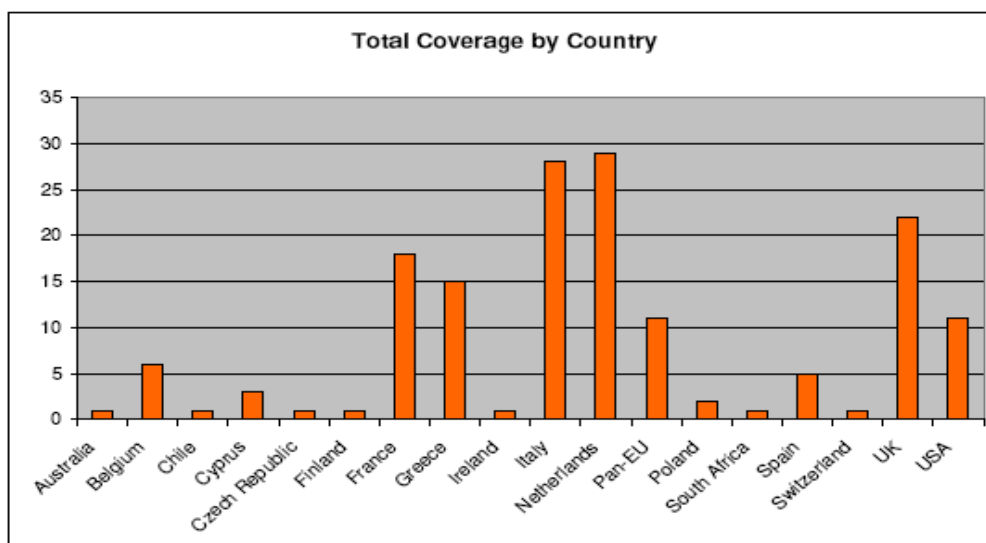
25

Media coverage and outreach

- Over 150 articles
- Coverage in key media: Reuters, AFP, Le Monde, Daily Mail, The Times, Corriere della Sera, Svenska Dagbladet, Le Soir en ligne, De Morgen, L'Express, New Scientist...
- Web streaming: watched live or on recording by around 1400 viewers

26

Media coverage (by country)



27

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Aspartame: Ramazzini study published

July 2005

THE GUARDIAN

Fresh fears raised about aspartame

la Repubblica.it

**Dolcificanti, aspartame nel mirino
Un rapporto accusa: è cancerogeno**

Adoçante aumenta incidência de cancro

Quando ingerido em doses muito próximas das autorizadas para consumo diário humano, revela estudo

I produttori si difendono: le ricerche degli ultimi 30 anni dicono che è innocuo
Il farmacologo Garattini: "Aspettiamo la pubblicazione integrale dello studio"

28

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

Aspartame: EFSA Opinion adopted

May 2006

The Times (Page # 14) / 06.05.2006 / Main Pages / 671340 /

Sweetener 'is not a cancer risk'

CORRIERE DELLA SERA DOLCIFICANTI

L'aspartame
supera l'esame
di sicurezza

Le Monde Régime
L'aspartame
est sans danger,
selon l'EFSA

Agencia EFE

**La EFSA confirma que la sal de aspartamo es segura
para consumo**

29

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority

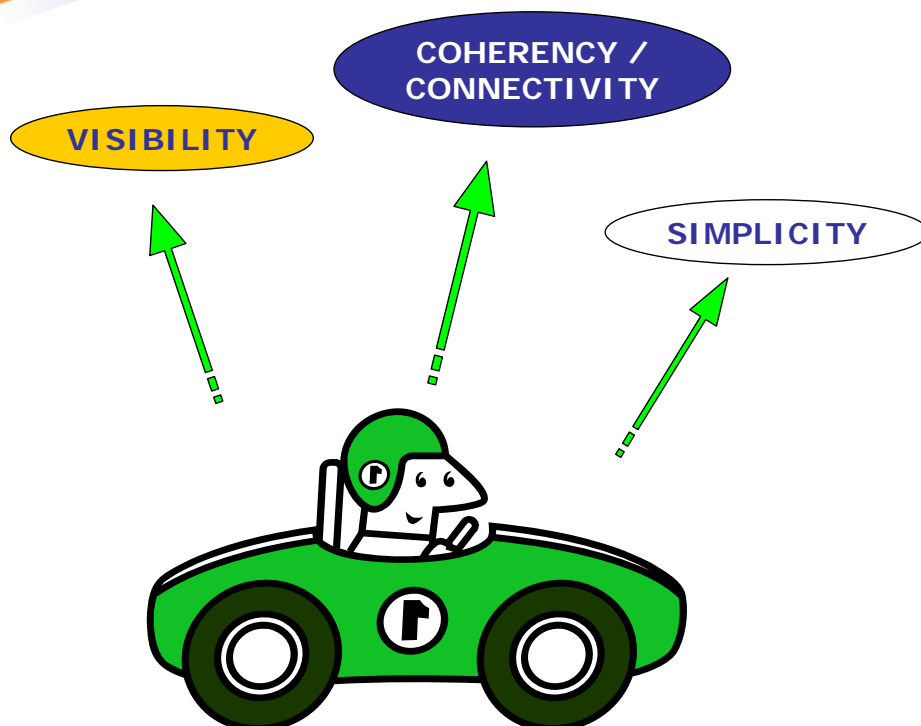
Communications on Aspartame : key learning

- Controversial issue of high public interest: need for accurate, factual and timely updates addressing public concerns
- Ramazzini Foundation kept apprised of developments
- Close co-ordination with regulatory and risk assessment authorities (in EU and beyond)
- Webcasting of press conference broadens reach, access to information and transparency

30

Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

European Food Safety Authority



EFSA Evaluation: Communications Enhance impact and effectiveness

Build:

- **Visibility** - for EFSA's Corporate mission and scientific expertise.
- **Simplicity** – clarity and relevance of EFSA risk communications
- **Coherence** – of information on food & feed safety across the Community

EFSA Risk Communications: Looking Ahead

- New communications tools for non-technical audiences, eg: "Focus on the issues", explanatory notes...
- Annual Review on Risk Communication (AGRC)
- Consumer perception research
- Information seminars for media
- Website redesign
- New scientific communications tools, eg EFSA Journal/scientific publishing house
- Joint communications with Member States
- Pan-European media monitoring and evaluation of communications initiatives

THANK YOU!