

# EFSA Risk Communications and Plans

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Stakeholder Platform 20 July 2006

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## Agenda

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

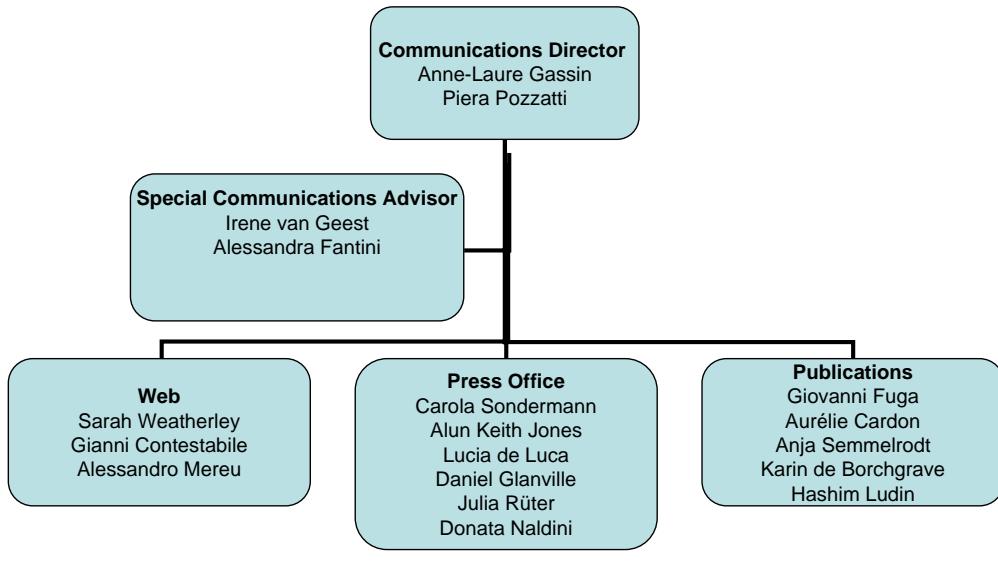
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# EFSA Communications Department



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# 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.

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# 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

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

**RESIDUES IN MEAT:** Cyprus, Greece, Belgium

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



**CONTAMINATION BY BACTERIA:** Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Slovakia

**POLLUTANTS LIKE MERCURY OR DIOXINS:** Belgium

**GMOs:** Austria

**ADDITIVES:** Lithuania, Estonia

**WELFARE OF FARMED ANIMALS:** Denmark, Sweden

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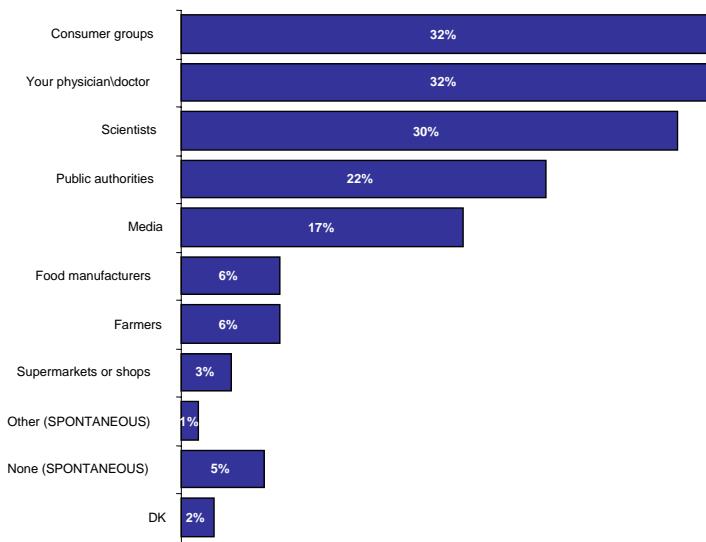
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## Sources of Information

### 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?



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## Who does EFSA communicate to?



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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

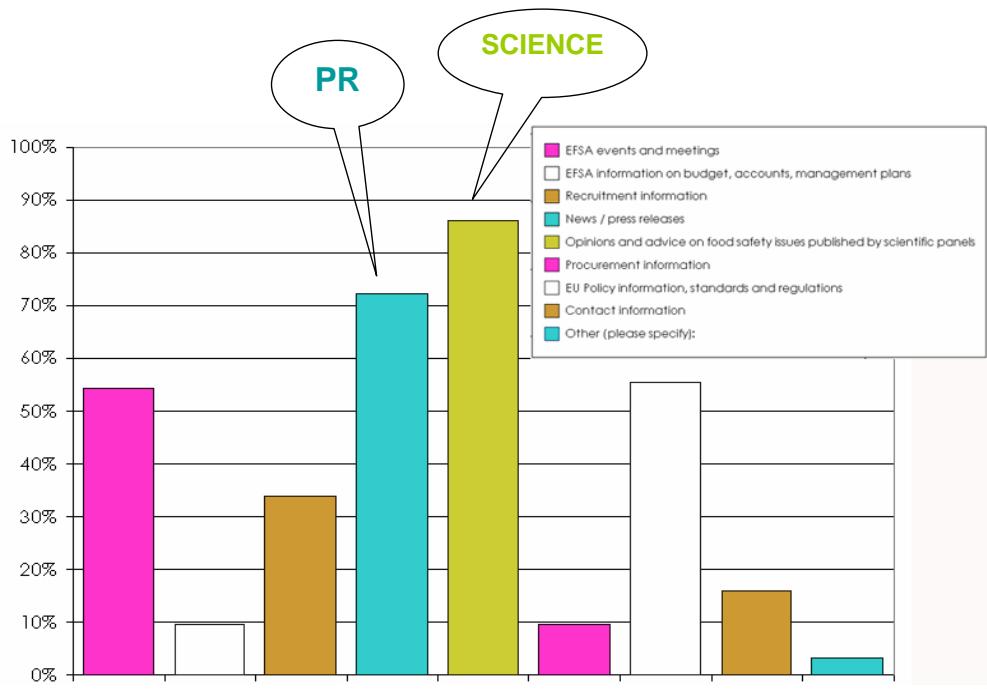


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## Our users agree! – web survey results

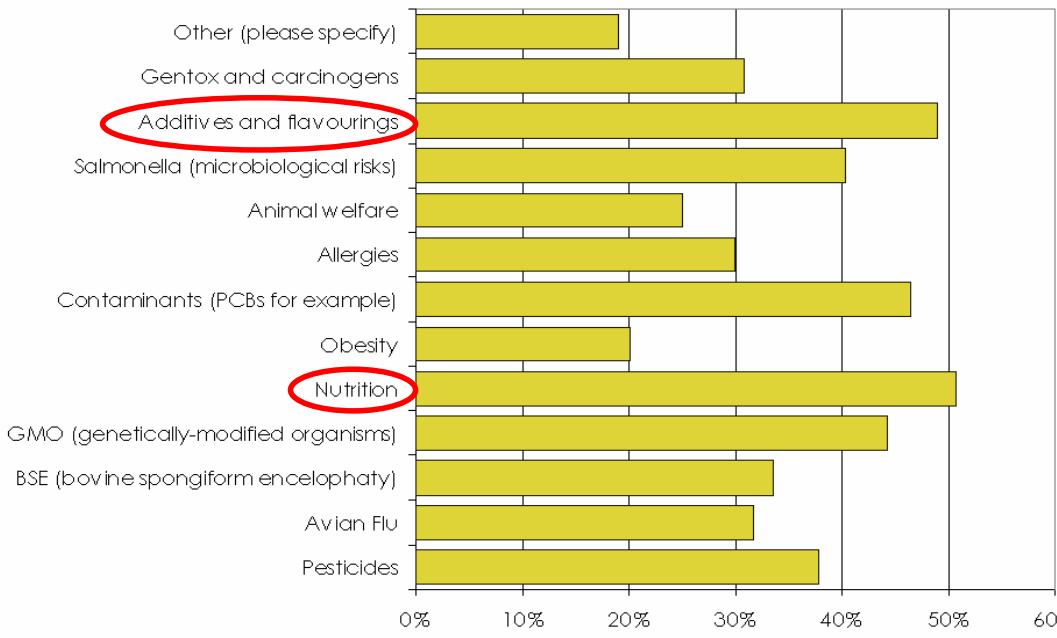


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## Topics of interest - web survey results



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## Communications Channels and Tools: «Influencing the influencers»

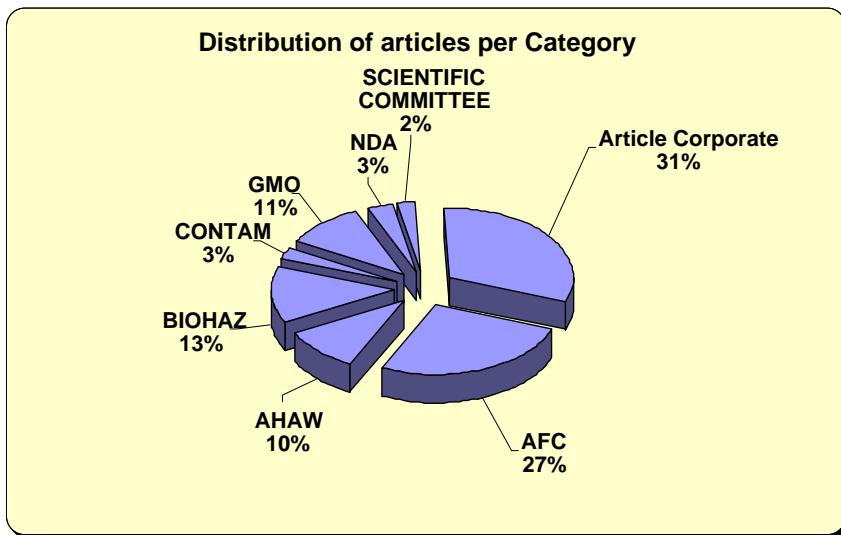
### 2. Press and Media – key intermediary with consumers on food safety issues:

-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



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## 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»**



Il parere espresso dall'Efsa (European Food Safety Authority) sulla questione degli contenitori di latticini in Italia conferma alle valutazioni da parte della multinazionale la sostanzialità della loro occupazione per la salute ai livelli di consumo quotidiani. La quotizitante valutazione, diffusa il 10 luglio, anticipa il parere prima previsto per la fine di settembre. Siamo rassicurati da questo parere che le valutazioni analoghe assunte dalle altre autorità europee sono giuste e gli effetti dell'ltx «proseguono il loro cammino», ha detto l'Efsa. La multinazionale, tuttavia, rilascia una nota in cui si afferma rispettivamente che «non ha mai fatto nulla per mettere in pericolo la sicurezza dei prodotti» e la posizione assunta dall'Efsa è la stessa assunta da

la Commissione Europea il 30 giugno.

Il parere dell'Efsa conferma alle valutazioni da parte della multinazionale la sostanzialità della loro occupazione per la salute ai livelli di consumo quotidiani.

«Sappiamo che le Autorità europee hanno sempre fatto molto per sforzarsi nell'interesse dei consumatori», ha detto Paul Negro, presidente della multinazionale.

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stampa offset UV con ltx, che è una tecnologia di stampa offset - una trascrizione percentuale degli effetti dell'ltx.

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**L'INFORMAZIONE**  
DI PARMA

**CAMPAGNA  
AMICA**

**E la mucca pazza inglese  
salvò quella italiana**

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## 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

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## EFSA Risk Communications in practice:

Aspartame

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## 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

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## 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?

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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)

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## Overview of activities related to the new study

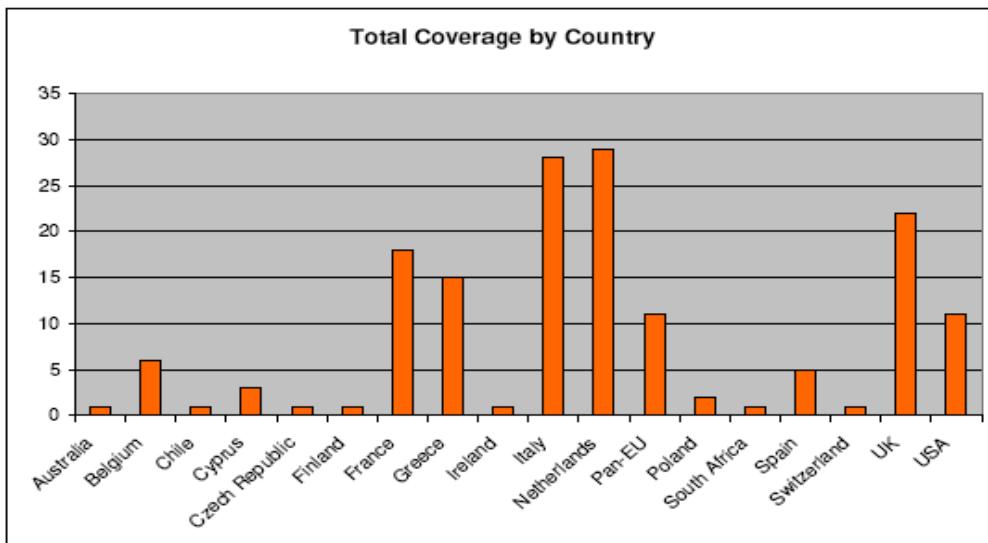
### May 2006

- 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

## 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

## Media coverage (by country)



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## 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 câncer**

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"

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# 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

**Le Monde**

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

L'aspartame  
superà l'esame  
di sicurezza

Agencia EFE

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

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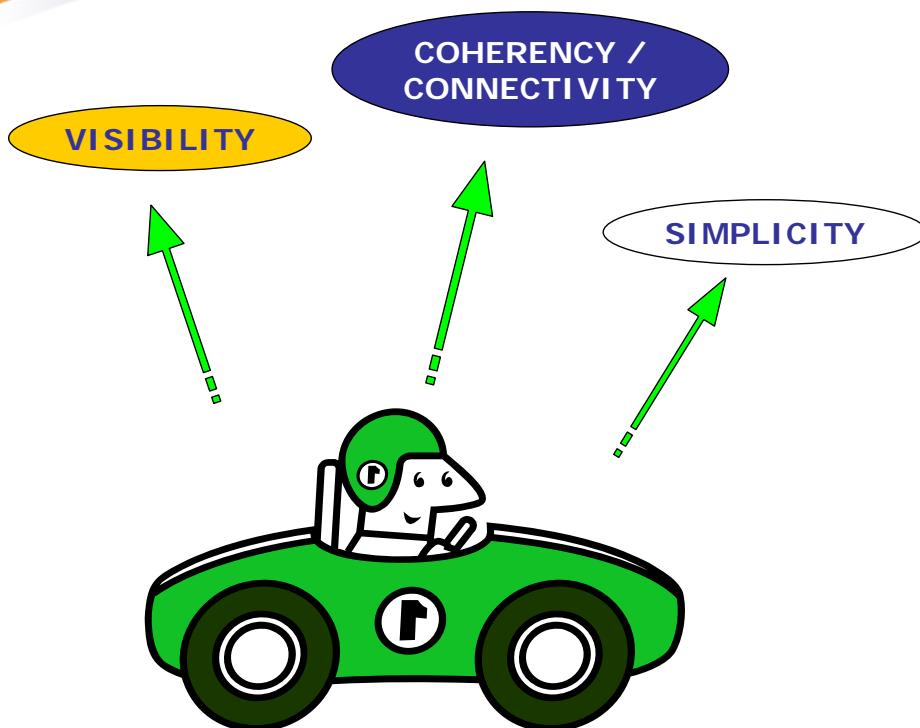
## Communications on Aspartame : key learning

- 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

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## 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

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## 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

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# THANK YOU!

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