

SAFE FOODS

Ellen van Kleef and Lynn Frewer
April 11, 2005



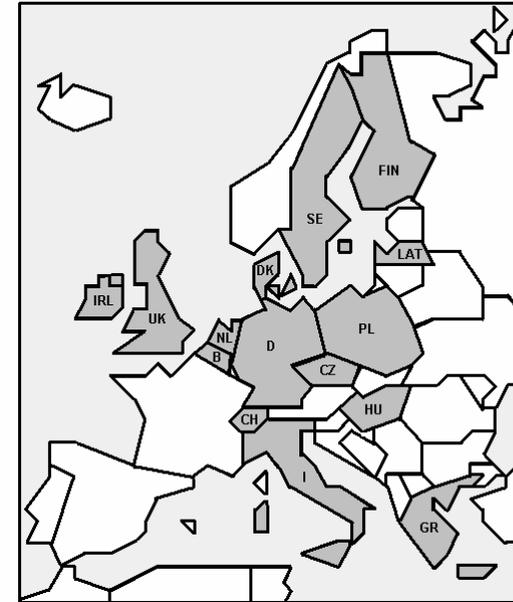
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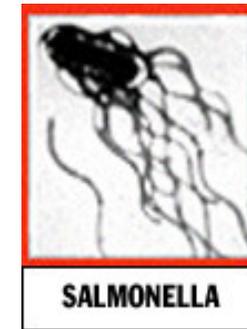
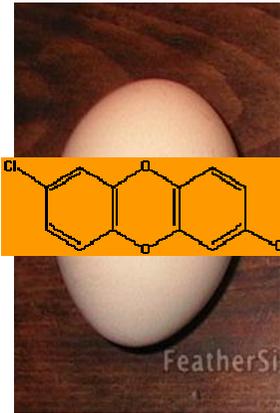
Outline of presentation

- SAFE FOODS project
 - Promoting Food Safety through a New Integrated Risk Analysis Approach for Foods
- Consumer research workpackage
 - Study of food risk management perceptions
 - Cross-national survey among consumers
- Training
- Concluding remarks

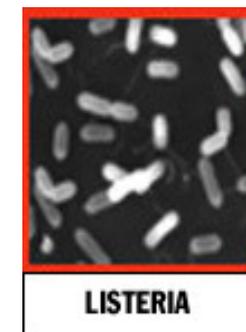
SAFE FOODS

- Type of Project: *Integrated Project*
- Coordinators
*Dr. H. A. Kuiper & Dr. H.J.P. Marvin
(RIKILT)*
- Period: *April 2004-March 2008*
- Project Participation
*33 partners
17 countries*
- Budget
*14,500,000 € total
11,400,000 € EU contribution*





Broad public concern about the safety of the European food supply



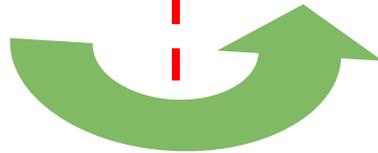
Traditional approach to Risk Analysis



Risk Assessment

Risk Management

Risk Communication



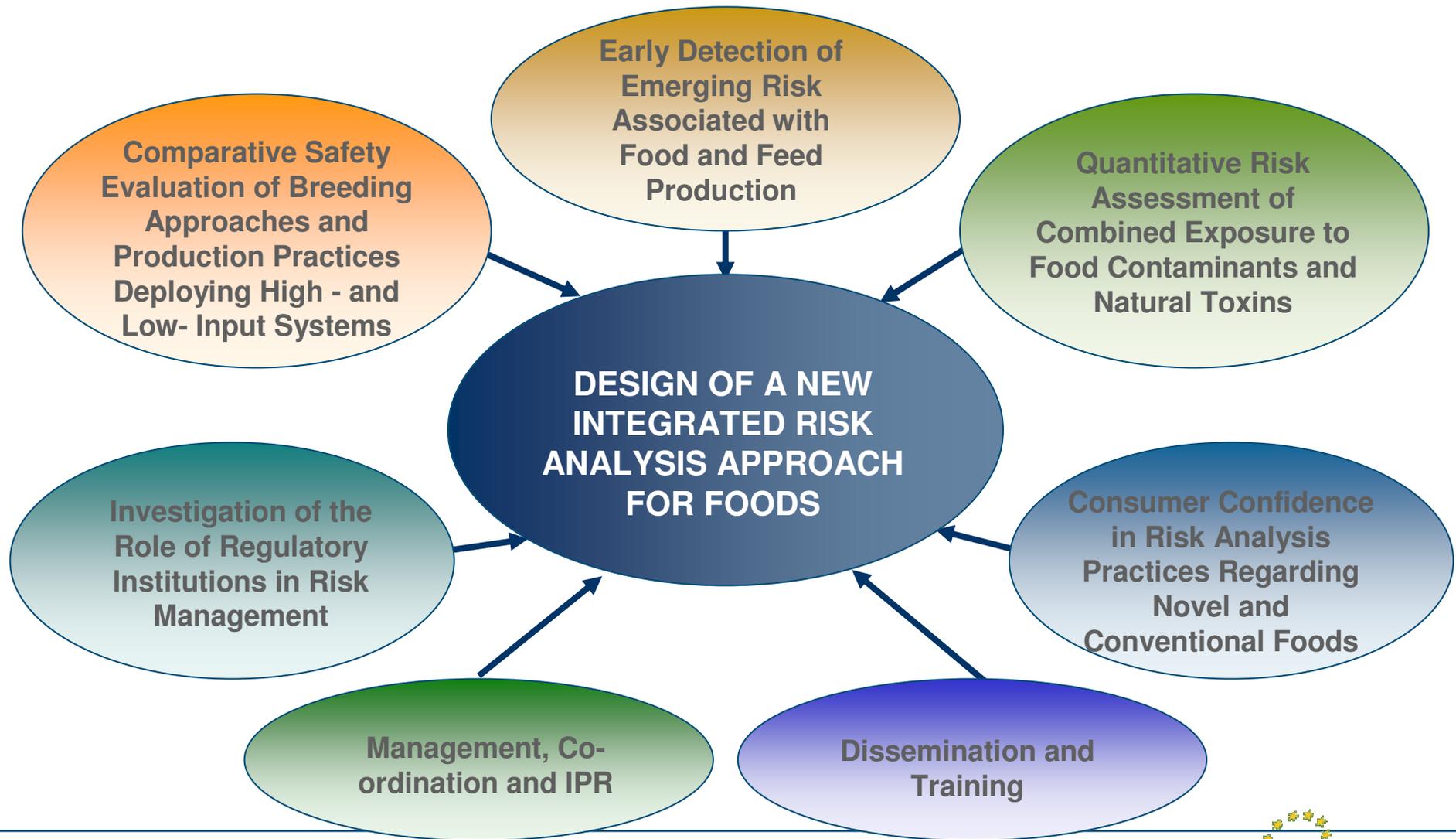
Overall objective SAFE FOODS

- SAFE FOODS aims at improving the integration of- and interaction between- the components of risk analysis
- This also fits into the EU-policy framework of strengthening confidence in food safety



(after WHO, 1998)

Overview SAFE FOODS



Consumer confidence in risk analysis and communication practices

Partners

- Wageningen University (WU), The Netherlands (Workpackage Leader)
Lynn Frewer, Ellen van Kleef, Filip Cnudde, Judith Cornelisse
- Institute of Food Research (IFR), United Kingdom
Gene Rowe, Julie Houghton
- Agricultural University of Copenhagen (KVL), Denmark
Sara Korzen-Bohr, Jesper Lassen
- DIALOGIK gGmbH (DIA), Germany
Uwe Pfenning
- Agricultural University of Athens (AUA), Greece
George Chryssochoidis, Thanasis Krystallis, Anna Strada
 - Subcontractor - Slovenia

Background and rationale of WP4 (1)

- 'Listening to the voice of the public' regarding food risk management
- Psychology of consumer risk perceptions drives public risk attitudes
 - Perceptions that *uncertainty* in risk assessments is not acknowledged increases risk perceptions and distrust in regulators
 - An *involuntary risk* over which people have no control is more threatening than one people choose to take
 - Potentially *catastrophic* risks concern people most
 - Unnatural (technological) risks are more threatening than natural ones
 - People make trade-offs between perceived personal and relevant against personal benefit
 - *Ethical representations* and concerns are emerging as an important determinant of consumer decision making

Background and rationale of WP4 (2)

- Key issues in SAFE FOODS
 - Understanding consumer perceptions, attitudes and beliefs regarding food risk management
 - Understanding differences between consumers, experts and decision-makers regarding their perceptions of food risk management
 - Identification of strategies to communicate uncertainty and variability in risk assessment
 - Resulting recommendations for better Food Risk Analysis (WP6)

WP4: the first 18 months

Study 1

Pilot consumer focus groups

Study 2

Social representations

Study 3

Consumer survey

What can we learn from previous research

■ Research on food risks

- Perceptions of risks (e.g. Slovic, 1993)
- Relative perceptions of risks associated with different types of food technologies and food-related hazards (e.g. Fife-Schaw and Rowe, 2000)
- Specific food risk issues, such as GM foods (Frewer et al, 2004), mad cow disease (e.g. Finucane, 2002), and conventional versus organic produce (e.g. Williams and Hammitt, 2001)
- Studies on how experts diverge from lay people (Hansen et al., 2004)
- Trust (e.g. Siegrist, 2000; Chryssochoidis et al., 2005)

Social representations of food risk management

- Objective of study
 - To understand how individuals from various relevant stakeholder groups with interests in food safety (i.e. consumers, food risk assessors, food risk managers, and food safety scientists) view *food risk management* practices
- Key questions
 - Is there a shared understanding how food risks *are and should be managed* by those responsible (regulators, food producers, consumers themselves)?
 - What determines consumers trust in those with responsibility to manage food hazards?

Method

- Exploratory pilot focus groups with consumers
 - Total of 41 participants: Denmark (10), Germany (11), Greece (10), and UK (n=9)
- Main study: four focus groups in each country involved with personal follow-up interviews, including a ranking task with a variety of food hazards and actors
- Consumers (n=46)
- Experts from different organizations
 - Food risk managers (n=18)
 - Food risk scientists (n=22)
 - Food risk assessors (n=22)

Key results

■ Consumers *versus* experts

- Risk assessors, risk managers and food safety scientists are not strictly separated groups
- Consumers feel more uncertain/indecisive than experts
- National differences between consumer groups regarding feelings of optimism and pessimism regarding effectiveness of food risk management
- Some consumers highly concerned, some unconcerned
- Disagreement among experts regarding effectiveness of risk management practices

Key factors influencing consumer perceptions of food risk management



Systems of control and law enforcement (1)

- Positive evaluations of consumers are closely related to whether authorities show efforts to:
 - Put systems of control in place and make them obvious
 - Be pro-active by focusing on prevention and inspection
 - ".. The best kind of control would be preventive, and not afterwards when twenty people have to be wheeled into hospital out of an old-people's home"
(consumer-Germany)*
 - Respond quickly when a food safety problems appears
 - Encourage scientific progress



Systems of control and law enforcement (2)

■ Consumers wonder whether...

- food hazards can be managed by the authorities

"No matter what the authorities do, we are getting more and more fat people in this country"

- motivation of risk management is primarily consumer protection

"So, I have ranked mad cow disease as being the best under control. And I have put it there because it has to do with export. It does not have very much to do with whether the rest of us get the mad cow disease."

Systems of control and law enforcement (3)

- Experts are slightly more positive than consumers because of believed efficacy of well-developed and implemented control systems
- Experts' major concerns
 - Lack of resources to apply *preventive measures*
'..we don't have enough money for inspection and control, so it's not done as good as it should be..' (Food risk assessor – Slovenia)
 - *Hidden food hazards* do not get enough attention
 - Specific stages of food chain are neglected (*farmers, consumers*)
 - *Insufficient efforts* to track down food hazards by authorities

Consumer education and information

- Importance of education stressed by both consumers and experts
- Consumers perceive *information overload* about food safety
 - Information is *not consistent or confusing*
 - *Sensational* media coverage
 - Information *difficult to understand*



Media reporting

- Consumers and experts
 - perceived quality of management is largely determined by amount of media attention
 - High levels of media attention potentially indicate good and bad risk management practices (institutional attention, what went wrong, sensational images)
 - Media is providing confusing information
- Only *experts* believe that media attention is causing *unnecessary worry* among consumers

Responsibility for managing food hazards

- Experts and consumers agree that who is responsible for good risk management (personal, authorities or food industry) depends on
 - the hazard (natural, technological)
 - involuntary exposure and personal control
 - For example, both attribute overweight and associated health problems on consumers' life style, which is for that reason a matter of personal responsibility
"McDonalds! That's personal surely? That is pure self regulation by consumers"

- Consumers took personal responsibility because of
 - scientific uncertainty,
 - lack of proper information
 - the influence of economic interests above consumer health protection

Role of science and risk assessments

■ Experts

- More research on food risk management
- Scientific uncertainty
 - hampers food risk management
 - not acknowledged by responsible authorities

■ Experts *and* consumers

- Scientific progress positively influences the risk management system, but...
- ...creates new problems as well



Risk acceptability

- Experts find some food hazards to be 'overmanaged'
- Influence of litigation culture is perceived important by some consumers (e.g. precautionary labelling)
 - 'But if you look at food labelling, they seem to slap the label 'could be traces of peanut' literally on anything' (consumer-UK)*
- A recurring theme: pro-active measures preventing food crises *versus* dealing with problems after they occur



Trustworthiness of food risk managers

- Value similarity

'They [consumer associations] do have the consumers' interests at heart'
(Consumer – UK)

- Knowledge and expertise of food safety managers and actors in food chain

- Idealism and traditions

- Power and ability to act

- Accessibility



Design of survey

- Objective:
 - development of conceptual framework to identify key factors related to consumers' evaluation of food risk management practices
- Data collection in same 5 countries
 - Pilot - April (n=50)
 - Representative sample - May (n=500)
- Dependent variable: overall evaluation of food risk management

e.g. *'when I buy foods, I am certain that it is safe to eat',*
'food risks are very well managed in our country'



Concluding remarks

- Food safety policy monitor
- Future consumer studies in SAFE FOODS
 - Small scale empirical studies on communication strategies
 - Development of code of best practice regarding communication (focus on uncertainty, variability, cross-cultural variation)
 - Inputs to integrated risk analysis framework (WP 6)



Training & Mobility in SAFE FOODS

Personnel Exchange

- 'on hands' training (laboratory techniques, modeling)
- all categories: PhD students, post-docs, senior scientists

Training within SAFE FOODS: Bridging the gap



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**NATURAL
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Training outside the SAFE FOODS consortium

WHAT?

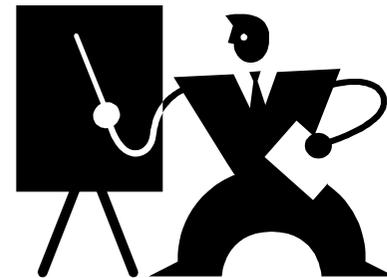
- *Basic* training module: 'awareness courses'
- *Expert* training modules: Specialist knowledge for people in the field

ABOUT?

- Various food safety research topics in SAFE FOODS:
Emerging risks, quantitative risk assessment,
consumer perceptions, risk analysis

HOW?

- Workshops, masterclasses
- On-line training courses



FOR?

- People in the field: Risk assessors, managers, communicators
- Special focus for training in new EU Member States and Pre-Accession Countries



Home - SAFE FOODS Public Website - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Bestand Bewerken Beeld Favorieten Extra Help

Vorige Zoeken Favorieten Geschiedenis

Adres <http://www.safefoods.nl/default.aspx> Ga naar

Koppelingen Beste van het web Channel Guide Gratis Hotmail Internet-startpagina Is het besturingssysteem origineel Koppelingen aanpassen Microsoft

Home

SAFE FOODS Public Website

Home Objectives Deliverables Workplan Participants News-Events-Training Publications Links

Safe Foods

Does diversification in agricultural production systems lead to diversification in risks?

Does the expanding European market lead to new food safety risks and can we identify them early?

What is the health impact of human exposure to combinations of food contaminants, and natural toxins?

How do risk analysis and communication practices affect consumer confidence?

Promoting Food Safety through a New Integrated Risk Analysis Approach for Foods

Recent food safety incidents and the introduction of genetically modified foods in Europe have resulted in an intense public debate regarding the safety of the European food supply. Consumers have little confidence in the safety of their food supply and remain sceptical and distrustful of the management procedures currently in place.

This Integrated Project addresses the issue of how consumer confidence in consumer protection and risk analysis can be restored and strengthened.

This project is subsidised by the European Commission through the 6th framework programme.

Contract number: Food-CT-2004-506446

European Commission

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Enter the **SAFE FOODS Project Site** (members only)

The SAFE FOODS Project team

Internet



Thank you!

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Method RANKING TASKS

■ Food hazards included

- pesticide residues on food
- natural toxins (e.g. poisonous mushrooms)
- genetically modified food crops (e.g. genetically modified maize)
- mad cow disease
- food allergy
- inappropriate dietary choice (e.g. too much sugar, fat or alcohol)
- food poisoning outbreak

■ Actors included

- European commission
- food industry
- food retailers
- consumer representative organization
- scientists working for universities
- scientists working for industry
- national ministry responsible for safety of food
- farmers



SAFE FOODS

Characteristics of the New Risk Analysis Model

- Integration of assessment of human health aspects of foods with consumer preferences and values.
- Active consumer participation in the various stages of the risk analysis process.
- Improved functional and structural risk management procedures.
- Improved risk communication with consumers throughout the process of risk analysis.
- Pan European applicability.