

European consumer's perspective

BioCop, Budapest 11 of May 2006



European consumer's perspective

BioCop, Budapest 11 of May 2006

outline

- BEUC and SCA - who we are
- Who is a consumer
- What is a risk
- Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic risk in food
- Consumer risk perception in food
- Communication

BEUC – the European Consumers’ Organisation

who we are

- ✓ 40 members from 29 European countries
(EU25 (minus Lithuania) plus Iceland, Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, Romania)
 - ✓ Try and influence, in the consumer interest, the development of EU policy and to promote and defend the interests of all European consumers (since 1962)
 - ✓ Funded by members and European Commission
- www.beuc.com

Slovene consumer organization - SCA

- **NGO**
- **founded by members in 1990**
- **Aim: consumer protection**
- **Founder of the consumer magazine VIP (in 1991)**
- **Main activities:**
 - **Consumer advice and information**
 - **Advocacy**
 - **Legal aid**
 - **Consumer education**
 - **International co-operation/European and global consumer movement**

European consumer's perspective

SCA national activities on safety

- **Product safety testing**
- **Consumer information in the VIP magazine**
- **Strong coverage in other media**
- **Maintain links with authorities and gov't**
- **Maintain links with the testing labs**
- **Raising awareness in business**
- **Raising consumer awareness on product safety**

zps@zveza.si

the consumer



- **Buys a product or service for own use, not for sale**
- **Child, parent**
- **Young, adult**
- **Professional, Housewife**
- **Healthy, sick.....**

the consumer

In context of food risk, vulnerable groups should present a measure to limits

- **Elderly population that is on the rise**
 - **Children**
 - **And**
- **Pregnant women**

What is risk

**harmful, undesired product properties
and/or
harmful, undesired product useage
properties**

**Hazard can be intrinsic, technological ,
environmental and also moral (malpractice)**

European consumer's perspective

Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors in food (1)

- Nitrates in vegetables (i)
- Nitrates and nitrites in meat products and cheese (e)
- Nitrates and nitrites in drinking water (e)

European consumer's perspective

Nitrates in leafy vegetables- ZPS testing on slovene market in 2003

- 14% of the samples above the 2500mg/kg
- 100g of the salad exceeds recommended daily intake
- Slovene consumers eat a lot of leafy salads, prepared meats and 2/3 of underground water for drinking contains near 50mg of nitrates

ZPS advice: varied diet of leafy vegies, do not consume meat products more than twice a week

Doctors advice to pregnant and lactating women: do not eat many leafy vegies, do not eat meat products, limit hard cheese intake

European consumer's perspective

Nitrates and nitrites – BEUC position

Expressed since 2003 and ongoing

- Reduction of exposure to nitrosamines by minimizing the addition to foodstuffs
- Correct use in the industry is controlled (HACCP)
- Not to be used to cover poor hygiene practices
- Quantitative assessment (the multi exposure)
- Limit the level in leafy vegies to below 2000mg/kg

European consumer's perspective

Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors in food (2)

- Pesticides (e)
- Heavy metals (i,e)

ZPS testing in fall 2002: 2/10 samples of fish from the marketplace had As and DDT at 90% of the limit value

European consumer's perspective

Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors in food (2)

- **Methyl mercury in fish**

Slovene researcher, a chemist, traveled the world, eating mostly fish.....

Analysing her hair after each trip to a specific country.....

For three years nobody listened to her, in Slovenia..

European consumer's perspective

Methyl mercury in fish- environmental past burden

- The highest amount of methyl mercury in her hair was from Finland
- Finland gov't advises consumers how much, what type of fish and how many times a week is sensible to eat fish
- Slovenia does not...yet..except ZPS

European consumer's perspective

Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors in food (3)

Acrylamide, BEUC position since 2003:

risk communication strategies on healthy cooking methods, the consumption of cooked foods and cooking induced toxins is needed

European consumer's perspective

Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors in food (4)

Residues of veterinary medicines (e)- BEUC position

- Harmonised monitoring and surveillance
- Precautionary approach to import (ie.chloramfenicol)
- Publishing results
- Minimise residues (good practices
ie.:Norway:fish:consumer organisation)

European consumer's perspective



Consumer confused?

- **Vegies, fish, meat, dairy products, cooking methods, right choice, (10 kg of chemicals per year)**

Needs science based evidence properly communicated (education, information, labelling) and assessed ("coctail")

European consumer's perspective

Eurobarometer 2005/2006 on risk perception in food

European consumer is worried:

- **Pesticides: 71%**
- **Veterinary residues: 68%**
- **Additives: 61%**
- **Polutants: 63%**

European consumer's perspective

Eurobarometer 2005/2006 on risk perception in food

European consumer makes a choice of foodstuffs on:

- Taste: 31%
- Pleasure: 29%
- Hunger: 27%
- Health: 19%
- quality: 42%
- price: 40%
- health: 14%
- food safety: 8%

European consumer's perspective

Eurobarometer 2005/2006 on risk perception in food

European consumer agrees 39%

disagrees 47%

that

Public authorities in the EU view the health of consumers as being more important than the profits of producers

European consumer's perspective

Eurobarometer 2005/2006 on risk perception in food

Preferred sources of information

- Consumer groups: 32%
- Physicians/doctors: 32%
- Public authority: 30%
- Media: 17%

Over 40% of consumers who hear of food risks in media either ignore it or worry and do nothing

European consumer's perspective

Eurobarometer 2005/2006 on risk perception in food

Conclusions on communication

- **In order to be effective, communication on risks need to be tailored to meet specific needs of target audiences**
- **Public authorities should seek to engage and involve consumer's most trusted information sources**

European consumer's perspective

BEUC emphasis

- **Risk perceptions and uncertainties need to be addressed through good risk communication**

European consumer's perspective

BEUC emphasis

- **Risk-benefit analysis should be clearly explained to consumers**

Impact on health, choice, environment, trade and competitiveness

European consumer's perspective

Thank you!

Marjana Peterman
marjana@zps-zveza.si

