

New research results on EU consumers' perceptions on food-related risks

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On 17 November 2010, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published the results of a recent Eurobarometer survey report on consumers' risk perception in the European Union (EU) [1]. The report, commissioned by EFSA, is based on interviews with nearly 27,000 European citizens from 27 Member States. It highlights consumers' perceptions in the following areas (i) perceptions of food and food-related risks, (ii) concerns about food-related risks, (iii) sources of information: public confidence and response, and (iv) the role and effectiveness of public authorities. Some of the findings are presented below.

- A majority of respondents associates food and eating with pleasure, and with enjoyment of meals with friends and family. The economic crisis and environmental pollution are viewed by more respondents as risks very likely to affect their lives than food-related problems.
- There is no single, widespread concern about food-related risks mentioned spontaneously by a majority of respondents. Nearly 20% of citizens spontaneously cite chemicals, pesticides and other substances as the major concerns. Fewer citizens are concerned about health and nutrition risks such as putting on weight or not having a healthy balanced diet.
- When asked to indicate the extent to which they feel confident about various information sources, citizens express the highest levels of confidence in information obtained from doctors and other health professionals (84%) and family and friends (82%). Other trusted information sources comprise consumer organisations, scientists and environmental protection groups.
- A majority of respondents (>80%) believes that public authorities in the EU should do more to ensure that food is healthy and to inform people about healthy diets and lifestyles. The majority of EU citizens thinks that public authorities in the EU are doing a good job in protecting them from specific food-related risks, but the survey also shows that there is room for improvement.

The Eurobarometer report was the second such study to be carried out in five years. The research objectives were to gain insights into consumer concerns relating to food and risks associated with the food chain and to establish the level of consumer confidence in public authorities on food safety-related issues.

References

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