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Food Scares - the public's perception

**Associate Parliamentary Food and Health
Forum, 28 June 2005**

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26 July 2005

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Who we are

The EU's largest consumer organisation

Formerly known as Consumers' Association

Independent of government and industry

Funded by our members

**Member of BEUC and Consumers'
International**

26 July 2005

Food Scares - recent headlines



New warning over food dye, Express, 22/4/05

Hundreds more foods face recall in cancer scare, Mail on Sunday, 20/2/2005

Poisons warning over that 'healthy' oily fish, Daily Mail, 25/6/04

Goat found to have BSE, Times, 2/11/04

Cancer warning over Scottish farmed salmon, Guardian, 9/1/04

Health warning over jars used for baby food, Independent, 16/10/2003

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Public's perceptions of food scares



Survey work in October 2004 found:

- Confusion reigns with views ranging from total cynicism about food safety advice to panic about any issue
- Main information sources are TV, newspapers and magazines with the internet as the most trusted source of advice
- Many key messages aren't getting through - e.g. PCB and dioxin levels in oily fish & BSE risks from beef and sheep meat

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Lessons for the future

- Open, transparent and inclusive decision-making critical for determining what is an acceptable level of risk
- Other societal concerns need to be factored into risk management and communication decisions
- Individual food scares need to be put into the context of what we eat overall
- FSA to respond more proactively to news stories to counter misleading or contradictory stories
- Use of other communication tools apart from the media (including internet) to disseminate advice

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Lesson for the future contd.

- Information needs to be regularly updated and reiterated so people know if the situation has change
- EU and global context

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