

Food Safety Risk Communication

The Key to Public Understanding,
Trust, Confidence and Support
– A U.S. Perspective

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October 28, 2003

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Codex and Many Countries are Using Risk Analysis to Improve Food Safety

Risk Analysis is a process consisting
of three components:

- Risk Management
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Communication

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Risk Management (Codex):

The Process of weighing policy alternatives, in consultation with all interested parties, considering risk assessment and other factors relevant for the health protection of consumers and for the promotion of fair trade practices and, if needed, selecting appropriate prevention and control options.

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Risk Assessment (Codex):

A scientifically based process consisting of the following steps:

- Hazard identifications;
- Hazard characterization;
- Exposure assessment; and
- Risk characterization

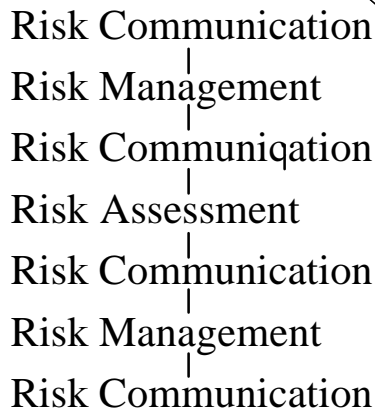
The Risk assessment process should be functionally separate from the risk management process.

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Risk Communication (Codex):

The interactive exchange of information and opinions throughout the risk analysis process, concerning risk, risk-related factors and risk perceptions, among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers, industry, the academic community and other interested parties, including the explanation of risk assessment findings and the basis of risk management decisions.

The Risk Analysis Process



Risk Communication Goal:

To provide meaningful, relevant and accurate information, in clear and understandable terms, to all stakeholders.

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The Objectives of Risk Communication are to:

- Promote awareness and understanding by all participants;
- Promote consistency and transparency;
- Assure the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the risk analysis process;
- Foster public trust and confidence;
- Promote the appropriate involvement of all interested parties; and
- Strengthen the working relationships and mutual respect among all participants

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Keys to Effective Risk Communication:

- Know the audience;
- Involve the scientific experts;
- Establish expertise in communication;
- Be a credible source of information;
- Share responsibility;
- Differentiate between science and value judgments;
- Provide ample opportunity for two-way communication; and
- Put the risk in perspective

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Some Personal Thoughts on My Risk Communication Experiences:

- Know the facts and always be honest;
- Provide the ground rules;
- Treat all stakeholders with equal respect;
- Hold all stakeholders to the same ground rules;
- Reach out to all stakeholders; and
- Don't expect agreement; but seek awareness and understanding

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In Summary:

- Risk communication is an integral component of the risk analysis process;
- It provides meaningful, accurate and timely information in clear terms to stakeholders; and
- Risk communication fosters public trust and confidence in food safety