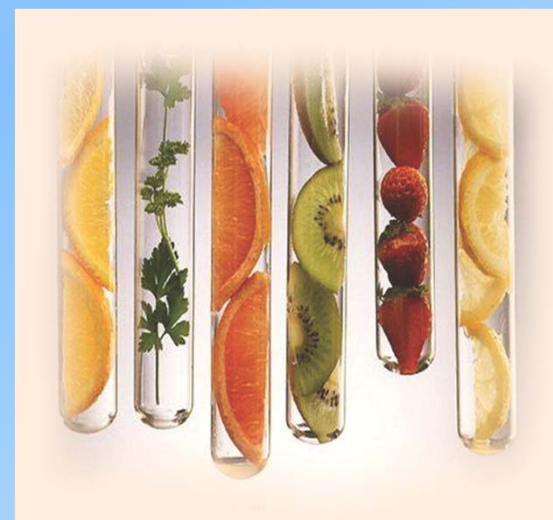




# What consumers can do for reducing chemical hazards through food?

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**19<sup>th</sup> EFSA FP Meeting**  
**19-20 February 2014, Parma**





## Introduction

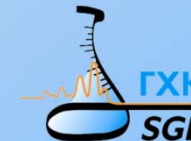


- Consumers are often exposed to **conflicting information** on the relation between **nutrition and health**. For instance, for a food product that is competently suggested as **healthy and nutritive**, they may be informed that it is **chemically or microbiologically unsafe** under certain conditions, e.g. consuming
  - fruits & vegetables is healthy, but they contain nitrates or pesticide residues
  - salmon or other fish with omega -3 content vs presence of methylmercury
  - foods containing aspartame





# Introduction

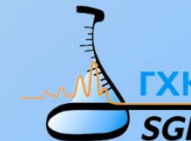


- First of all **consumers should be correctly informed and educated**, so as to have a **better risk perception**, **choose a healthy diet** and have good physical activity!
  - Healthy diet is the diet that includes important food groups, such as cereals and their products, fruits & vegetables, milk & dairy products, fish, poultry, less meat, eggs and olive oil ( pyramid guide) and is based on the **Mediterranean diet!**
- Then **can consumers do something about reducing chemical hazards/risks through food?**





## Useful guidelines to consumers for reducing chemical risks

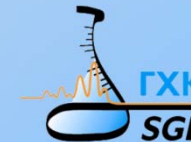


- **Prefer foods**, especially for the children, which contain **less food additives “E”** (colours, preservatives etc.) by checking their label. *Of course this is based on the **precautionary principle** and you have to know that all these additives are restricted for their use by the relevant EU legislation and controlled by the competent authorities.*
- Do not consume unwashed vegetables and fruits.
- **Wash the fruits and vegetables** with very diluted lather, then with a little bit of vinegar & salt diluted in water and rinse. *In this way you reduce chemicals from their surface (e.g. PAHs, pesticides res., Pb) and microbiological risks.*





## Useful guidelines to consumers for reducing chemical risks (2)

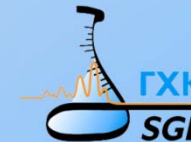


- When preparing salads, use a **variety of vegetables** of **different colours** and preferably **less green leafy** vegetables. *In this way you receive a variety of vitamins, natural antioxidants, micronutrients & less nitrates*
- When baking/ frying your food (e.g. potatoes) be careful **not to overcook it**, in order to avoid/ reduce the formation of acrylamide, PAHs etc.
- Store nuts and cereals in **cool and dry place** and discard the visually seen contaminated ones. They may contain mycotoxins.





## Useful guidelines to consumers for prevention of chemical risks (3)



- **When consuming fish,** prefer the smaller and less fatty ones, which generally bioaccumulate less chemical contaminants, such as heavy metals, dioxins and PCBs.




- When preparing **seafood or other food of animal origin** for cooking, it is **better to remove offal**, including cuttlefish ink, because offal bioaccumulate more heavy metals and other toxic substances such as veterinary drug residues.
- Prepare food **preferably at home**.  
In this way you have better control of the quality of raw materials you use.





## Useful guidelines to consumers for prevention of chemical risks (4)

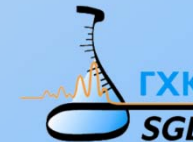


- When **buying cooking utensils** and other materials intended to come into contact with food, choose those that have the **proper symbol**, in the case it is not clear they are intended for food ( Reg.1935/2004).
- Use cooking or storing utensils according to **their instructions of use** and for the food they are intended for. 
- Store food in refrigerator and preferably in **glass or stainless steel 18/8 containers**, they are more inert than others e.g. plastic.
- Be careful with the **very cheap products**, *especially with soft plastic PVC children toys which can be put in mouth, they may contain forbidden phthalate esters.*
- **Pregnant women** should take more care about their choices and **their diet!** *The risk is greater for the foetus during the first months of pregnancy, but also for infants and children that are much more vulnerable!*





## Conclusion



All the above hazards are prescribed /**restricted by relevant EU legislation**, controlled by the competent authorities and the advices are based on findings from **multiannual control** or monitoring plans carried out at SGL and taking into account relevant EFSA opinions and results of research projects.

Consumers with their responsible choices can do a lot towards a healthy and safe diet!

***Thank you for your attention!***



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