

HOW SAFE IS OUR DAILY FOOD?

A moment to think about something we often take for granted

The first-ever World Food Safety Day, an initiative of the United Nations, was celebrated on 7 June 2019. At the GSC, LIFE organised a lunchtime conference with two experts from EFSA – the European Food Safety Authority (located in Parma) – who illustrated the challenges that the EU faces in maintaining its high level of food safety.

1> 'Everyone's business'
Food is the starting point for our energy, our health and our well-being, which is why it's 'everyone's business'. We often take it for granted that our food is safe, but we live in an increasingly interconnected world and the way in which food is produced, stored, handled, traded and consumed must be in line with agreed standards and regulations. Even though the EU is one of the safest areas in the world, there are 23 million cases of foodborne illnesses annually and an estimated 5 000 people die every year in the EU because of unsafe food. If we consider all the food crises over the past two decades, we understand the crucial role of EFSA, which was created in 2002 specifically to provide scientific advice to EU and Member State risk managers responsible for policy decisions aiming at protecting the health of European consumers.

2> 'From farm to fork'
The EFSA experts explained the importance of an integrated 'from farm to fork' approach covering all sectors of the food chain, as each level has its own kinds of risks. Specialised scientists cover specific areas and then interact together. The integrated approach is also crucial to ensuring effective control systems covering



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all sectors, including animal health, animal welfare, animal nutrition and plant health. At the same time, high standards are becoming increasingly important to consumers, as shown by the results of a recent Eurobarometer survey. Among other key results, the survey shows that when it comes to information on food risks, trust in scientists has grown by over 9%. Furthermore, 1 in 5 Europeans say safety is their main concern when choosing food. For most Europeans, safety is one of several factors, together with price, taste, nutrition and food origin, that influence their eating habits and food choices.

3> Attentive monitoring at our canteens
As for the food consumed in the

Council canteens every day, the Catering Unit specifies that 'food safety standards on our premises are very high'. Staff in the unit monitor the raw material very attentively when it arrives at the Council. At the same time, they check the labels, packaging and temperature together with hygiene standards. In particular, they take into account three groups of risks: physical, chemical and biological. Anyone who finds something suspicious in one of the canteen dishes can contact them and, in case of anomalies, an investigation will be launched.



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