

Consumer understanding of food risk: chemicals (January 2016)

Area of research interest: [Chemical hazards in food and feed](#)

Study duration: 2015-06-01

Planned completion: 1 January 2016

Conducted by: TNS BMRB Research

The findings in this report are drawn from four qualitative Citizens Forums and an online survey of 2,708 consumers on the FSA Consumer Panel. Participants' overall level of knowledge about chemicals in food was limited. Two thirds of participants in the survey (66%) stated that they were not well informed on the topic. In the qualitative Citizens' Forums, participants' conception of chemicals in food was mostly focussed on man-made chemicals deliberately added by producers (such as sweeteners and preservatives) – there was almost no spontaneous suggestion of the existence of naturally produced chemicals.

Participants gave mixed responses about the amount of further information they would like to receive. It was felt that too much information about chemicals that are present in food would risk overwhelming consumers, and participants were uncomfortable with learning about chemicals that they felt they could do little to avoid. Participants were much more supportive of the idea of communicating risks to the public when:

1. the risks were particularly salient or dangerous
2. there were clear actions consumers could take to avoid or reduce risk

Research report

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