# Food safety: action plan, European Food Authority. White Paper

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The Council held a debate, open to the public, on the Commission's White Paper on Food Safety, focusing in particular on issues related to the establishment of an independent European Food Authority. Ministers concentrated their interventions on the tasks of the proposed Authority, its cooperation with the relevant scientific agencies and institutions of the Member States and the rules to ensure its proper functioning. Summing up the debate, the Presidency noted that, with a view to guarantee a high level of safety in food, the establishment of an independent European Food Authority, acting in a transparent way, is now considered urgent by all Ministers. The tasks to be conferred on the Authority should include the elaboration of independent scientific opinions, data gathering, risk analysis and consumer dialogue and information. Aspects related to risk management should remain, however, the competence of European institutions, as established by the Treaty. The Presidency also mentioned the important role that the future European Food Authority will have in effectively presenting and explaining scientific opinions related to food safety, on which Community legislation is founded, at international level, also referring to the negotiations within the World Trade Organisation. The Presidency considered the results of the debate a useful input in view of the preparation of a progress report to the Fiera European Council of 19-20 June 2000. In this framework the "Agriculture" and the "Consumer" sessions of the Council will also give a contribution, in relation to items linked to their respective competencies.