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

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The Council held an orientation debate on the Commission's White Paper on food safety confirming that a majority of Member States broadly agree with the principles outlined in the document. The debate focussed in particular on the consumer information aspects of the White Paper addressing questions related to the provision of scientific information to the consumers, the need for information campaigns on nutrition at Community level and on possible Community provisions to regulate claims regarding consumer health protection. All delegations expressed themselves in favour of public availability of the information related to scientific opinions according to procedures guaranteeing transparency. In addition, a majority have underlined the importance of clarity of the information provided to customers, certain delegations pointing to the serious consequences that might arise in case of misunderstandings in this field. The role of the proposed Food Safety Authority in this area was highlighted. In relation to nutritional campaigns, Member States felt that initiatives should continue to be taken at national or local level in connection with diversity of consumer habits with complementary action at the EU level on questions of general interest. Finally, most delegations were open to the introduction of EU provisions to regulate functional claims on food, as outlined by the Commission's White Paper. The need to avoid uncertainty of consumers through such claims was stressed by all. The President thanked Member States for their contributions and noted that the results of the debate will be a useful input in the preparation of the Presidency progress report to be presented at the Feira European Council of 19-20 June 2000.