# Food law, European Food Authority, and food safety

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The Council held an open debate on the subject of food safety and the future European Food Authority on the basis of the proposal on the matter submitted by the Commission. From the debate it emerged that in general the delegations felt there was an urgent need to act on this proposal, the overall approach of which they endorsed. In particular they shared the view that implementation of the general principles of food law advocated by the Commission (scientific basis, precautionary principle, traceability, transparency) at every point in the food chain, on the basis of a new, "integrated" approach, ought to result in a clear, consistent legal framework with the highest health standards. The greatest possible health protection would thus be guaranteed at Community level, which is where decisions should preferably be taken. The debate also showed broad agreement on the fact that high-level, independent, transparent assessment of risks to health is vital to effective risk management and hence to ensuring that the responsible authorities take the right decisions at the right time. The Food Authority ought therefore to make a useful contribution to the safety of the food supply and consequently to crisis prevention. It was felt that in crisis situations it would be for the Food Authority · by means of its scientific opinions · to advise the Commission and the Member States as fully and as swiftly as possible on the emergency measures to be taken. Concluding the debate, the President made a point of stressing that food safety in Europe had progressed, on the one hand driven by the need to improve the Community response to the BSE crisis, and on the other carried forward by the groundwork done by the Commission since its White Paper in January.