

Report of the Risk Communication Workshop Entitled “Risk Assessment and Risk Communication for New Chemical Contaminants in Foods”

YOSHIHISA KATSURAGI, Ph.D.
Manager, Global R&D-Health Care Food-
Kao Corporation

< Summary >

The risk communication workshop entitled “Risk Assessment and Risk Communication for New Chemical Contaminants in Foods” was held on September 8th 2010. The workshop was organized by the Research Center of Food Safety of the University of Tokyo. Two special lectures presented at this workshop are summarized in this article.

Ms. Irene van Geest from the University of Twente in the Netherlands and formerly responsible for risk communication at EFSA, presented the first lecture. This lecture was entitled “New Contaminants or New Risk?”. Ms. Van Geest gave an overview of three cases, “acrylamide”, “semicarbazide” and “bisphenol A” in the context of lessons learned in Europe. Her summary indicated that the identification of new risk is not always raise new public concerns, and that panic reactions can be avoided by providing appropriate risk communication. It was also shown that authorities have to understand the public concern, and have to be transparent by reporting to the public future process to understand the risk.

Dr. Angelica Preiß-Weigert, who is the Director of Contaminant at the German federal institute for risk assessment (BfR), introduced “BfR Guidance Document for Health Assessment” which reports a standardized procedure for risk assessment in Germany. In this guidance report, the risk assessment and the risk communication processes for 3-MCPD fatty acid ester and glycidol fatty acid ester, which are new chemical contaminants in food, were introduced. Dr. Preiß-Weigert emphasized that basic thought to assess risk for new chemicals that have not sufficient safety data, recommendations to provide to industry, communications on risk for the public, and the future actions to be taken by BfR.