A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows fresh produce, including green leafy vegetables and purple-tinged leaves, appearing to be in motion or falling from the top.

*E. Coli O104 Outbreak in Europe  
Update & dialogue*

*Industry perspective*

*Frédéric Rosseneu*

# Content

- About Freshfel Europe
- Food borne outbreaks and F&V in the EU
- Industry perception of crisis response
- Industry impact
- Conclusions

# About Freshfel Europe

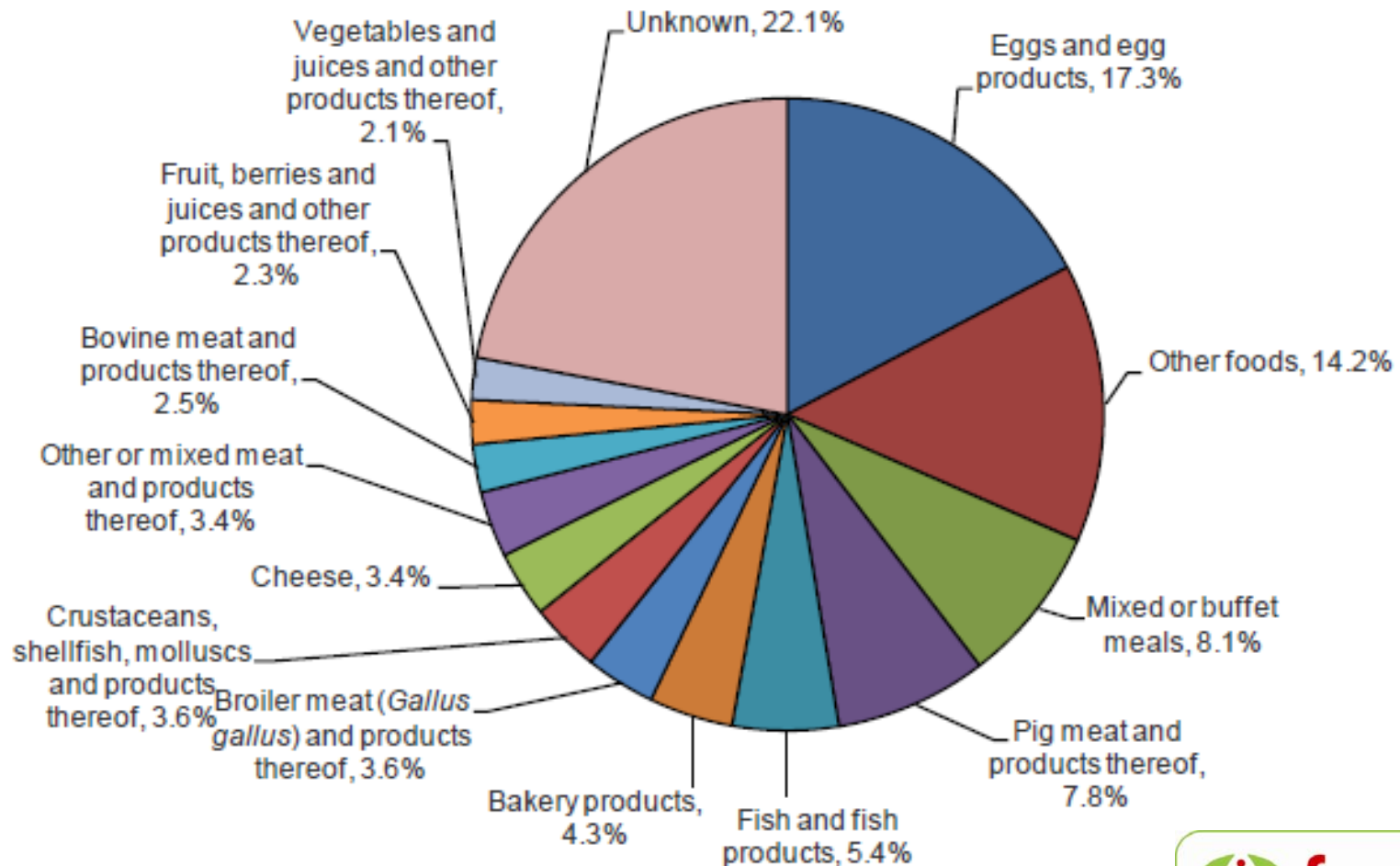
- What?: European trade association representing fresh produce industry, based in Brussels
- About our structure:
  - *Associations*
  - *Companies*
  - *Members across the supply chain and around the world*
- About our Mission: Stimulate consumption of fresh fruit & vegetables
  - *Improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the sector*
  - *Facilitate international fresh produce trade*
  - *Assist the sector to comply with the highest safety rules*
  - *Provide a favourable environment to promote the benefits of fresh produce*



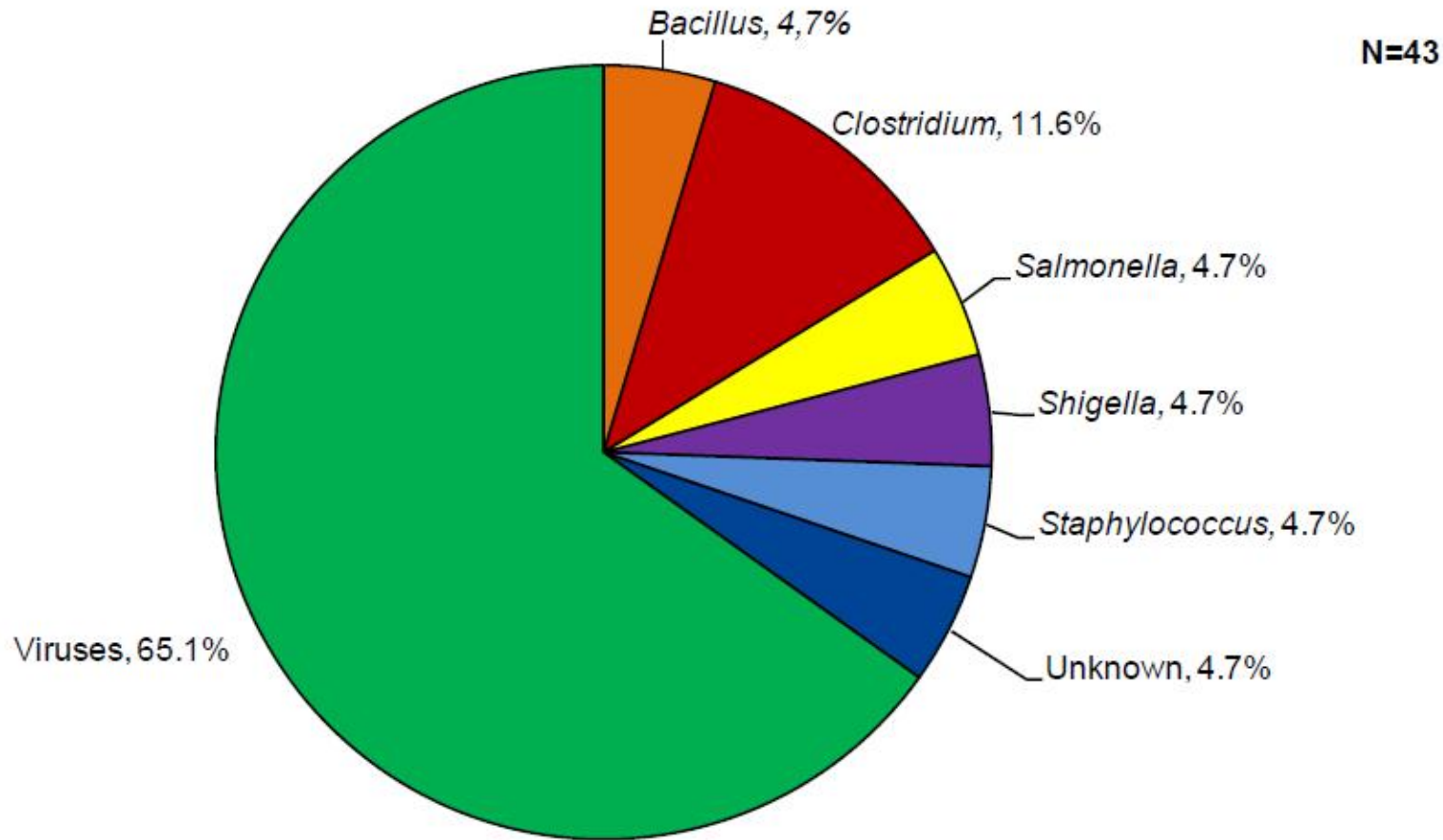
# Food borne outbreaks and F&V in the EU

## *Distribution of verified outbreaks by food vehicle in EU*

N=977



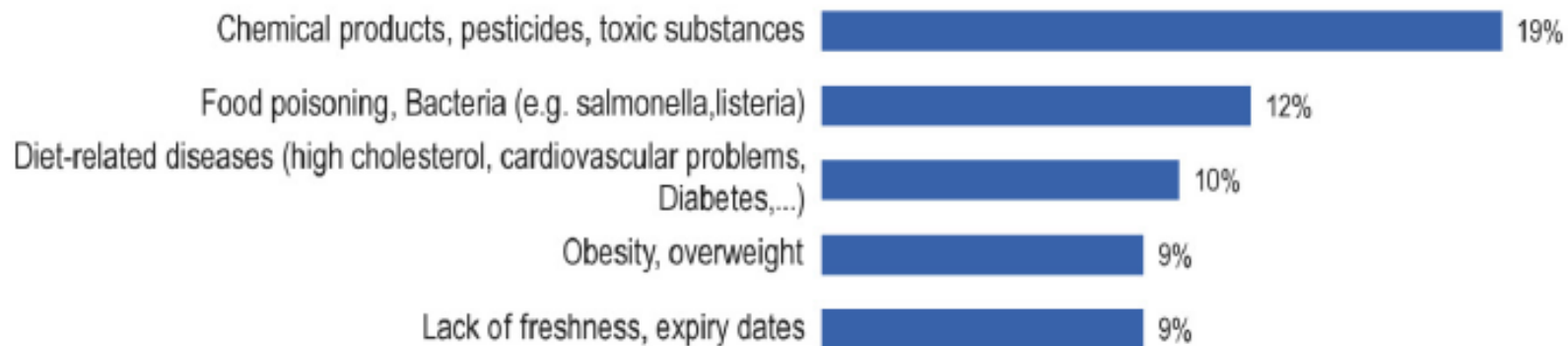
# Overview causative agents for for food-borne outbreaks involving fruit and vegetables:



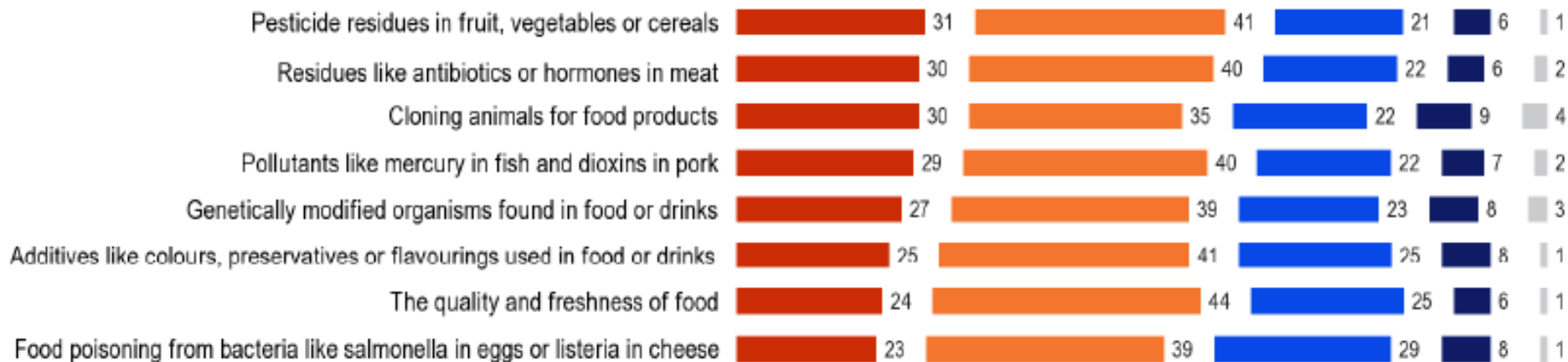
# Food borne outbreaks and F&V in the EU

- HACCP mandatory post farm gate
- Many voluntary hygiene codes for primary production
- Inclusion hygiene principles in assurance schemes (e.g. GlobalGAP)
- Differences with US supply chain:
  - Use water & fertiliser
  - Importance protected horticulture crops
  - Shorter transport => shelf life
  - Cold chain

## Spontaneous responses to problems and risks associated with food



## Prompted responses to problems and risks associated with food





# Test 1



Pestizidrückstände in Obst und Gemüse

2006 Greenpeace campaigns

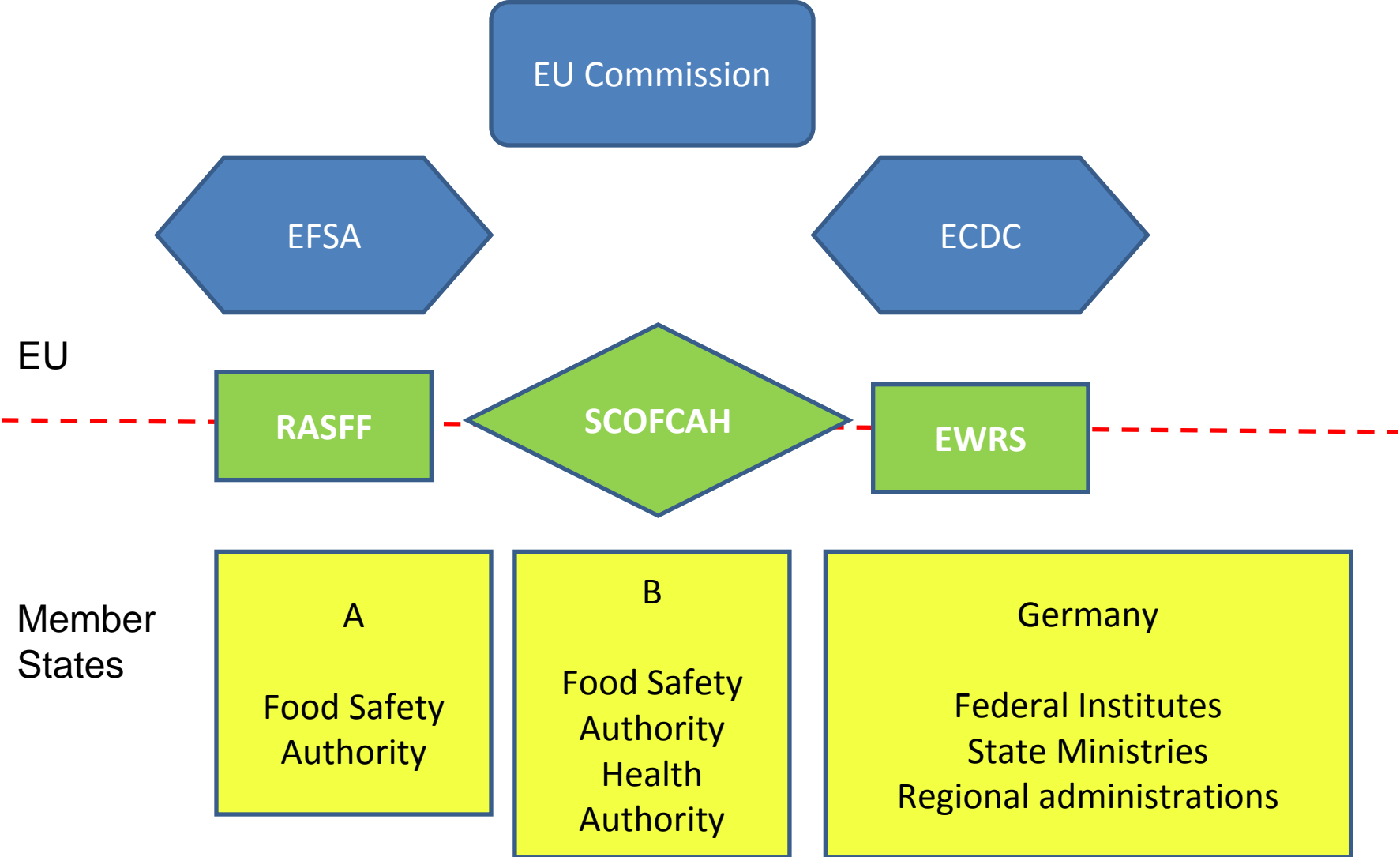


# Industry perception of crisis response

Member States	Number of HUS STEC cases (deaths)	Number of non-HUS STEC cases (deaths)
Austria	1 (0)	4 (0)
Czech Republic	0 (0)	1 (0)
Denmark	10 (0)	16 (0)
France	9 (0)*	2 (0)* 2 (0)**
Germany	733 (28)	3 052 (17)
Greece	0 (0)	1 (0)
Luxembourg	1 (0)	1 (0)
Netherlands	4 (0)	7 (0)
Norway	0 (0)	1 (0)
Poland	2 (0)	1 (0)
Spain	1 (0)	1 (0)
Sweden	18 (1)	35 (0)
The United Kingdom	3 (0)	4 (0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>782 (29)</b>	<b>3 128 (17)</b>

Source: ECDC – status 27 July; latest date of illness onset : 7 July

# Industry perception of crisis response



# Industry perception of crisis response

- Industry (and its knowledge) largely ignored during investigations
  - Investigation results and conclusions first to press, than to industry
  - Crucial crisis communication mistakes:
    - Different interlocutors
    - Awaiting final results ?
- => Consumer confidence

# Industry perception of crisis response

- Risk communication starts May 25th with negative consumption advice on raw tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce **in** Northern Germany
- May 27th Hamburg authorities incriminate Spanish cucumber lots on the basis of preliminary results
- Suspect is 'identified' => all hell breaks loose



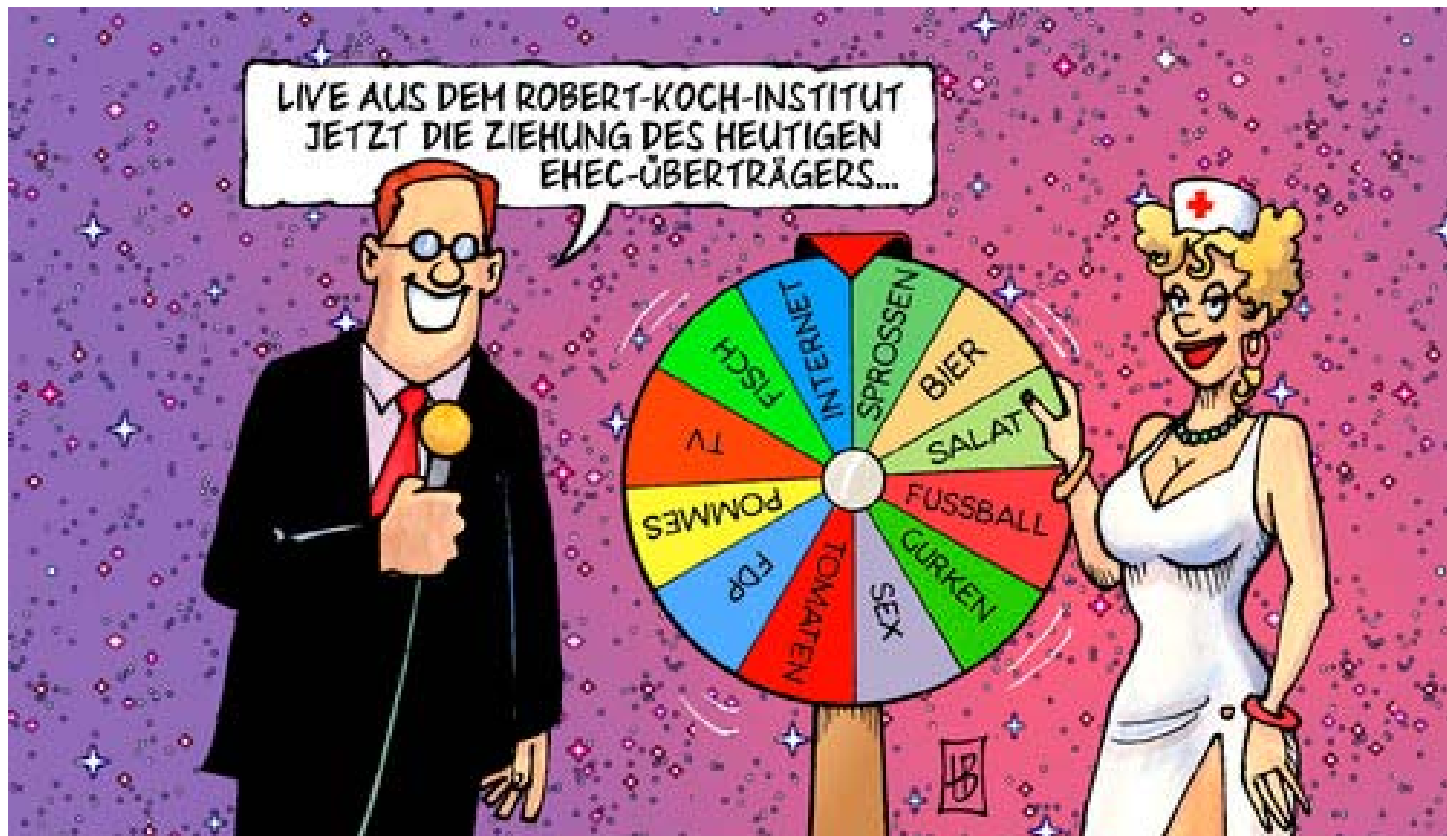
- Necessity to communicate?

# Industry perception of crisis response

- Immediate impact:
  - EU wide media coverage
  - Consumption of cucumbers and Spanish produce across the board
  - Price cucumbers and other vegetables across EU market
  - Recall suspect lots of Spanish companies accompanied by unfortunate comments from politicians => perception of internal trade barriers
  - Russia bans import of German and Spanish vegetables
  - Information requests on fertiliser and water quality
  - Requests for EHEC-free certifications
- June 1st: Spanish cucumbers are not the source of the outbreak

# Industry perception of crisis response

- Following days characterised by confusing press and official coverage regarding the source, sprouts enter in the picture



<p>DER SCHLACHTER VOM BÖLKAN</p> <p>Schlimmster <b>KRIEGS-Verbrecher</b> gefasst!</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Darm-Seuche</p> <p><b>Todes-Keim</b> kommt aus Spanien!</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Fast 1000 Infizierte in Deutschland</p> <p><b>Hier wütet der Killer-Keim!</b></p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Justin Bieber im Liebes-Fieber</p> <p>Fifa-Ermittlungen: Stürzt Blatter?</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>
<p>Kachelmann</p> <p>So würden Schöffen entscheiden</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>(Gerichte um TV-Rauswurf)</p> <p><b>Mieses Spiel mit kranker Monica Lierhaus</b></p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Schöneberger gewinnt 1 Mio. Euro bei Jauch</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p><b>Beschlossen! Atom-Aus!</b></p> <p>Aber woher kommt dann unser Strom? Und was kostet uns das?</p> <p>ROTE KARTE! NEI ZAHNFEISCH-ENTZÜNDUNGEN!</p> <p>WM in Katar gekauft!</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>
<p>102 Tage nach „Wetten, dass...?“</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Michelle Hunziker tröstet gelähmten Samuel</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Forscher entdecken nur des Todes-Keims führt nach Afrika!</p> <p>Danke Gomez!</p> <p>Blatter siegt im Fifa-Skandal</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p><b>Kachelmann Freispruch, aber...</b></p> <p>„Wie entlassen den Angeklagten und die Nebenklägerin mit ihrem unfähigen Anwalt aus der Welt zu schaffen den Verdacht an als potenziellen Vergeßliches, sie als potenzielle mörderisch Lüglerin.“</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>
<p><b>EHEC-Alarm!</b></p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Todes-Keime wüten immer schlimmer Ärzte sind ratlos und verzweifelt Politiker rufen zu Blutspenden aus!</p> <p>NEUER Ich werde richtiger Bayer</p> <p>GZSZ-Star steigt aus!</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Alte Spur zu Killer-Keimen</p> <p><b>Bingo! Rubbeln Sie sich 10 000 €</b></p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>	<p>Heiße Spur zu Killer-Keimen</p> <p>Waren es verseuchte Sprossen?</p> <p>Schläger-Attacke auf Berti Vogts</p> <p><b>Bild</b></p>

# Industry perception of crisis response

- June 9th: EFSA opinion
  - Role fresh produce in food borne outbreaks, RTE trends
  - Mitigation options:
    - Prevention rather than elimination
    - GAP, GMP, HACCP
    - Asymptomatic carriers in food handling
    - Pre-harvest: farm animals, water quality and manure quality
    - Post-harvest: water quality, food hygiene practices, hygiene mgt food premises, cold chain
- Most options are commonly practiced by industry



# Industry perception of crisis response

- June 10th: advice on raw cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce withdrawn, replaced by raw sprouts
- June 15th: small outbreak in France
- Several Member States issue negative consumption advices on raw sprouts
- EHEC task force established with EFSA and MS
- Industry involved with a view to trace forward exercise
- July 5th: EFSA report confirms Egyptian fenugreek seeds as most probably source, negative consumption advice on sprouts => import ban
- Today: case closed?

# Industry perception of crisis response

- Sprouts
  - Warnings: confusion on scope
  - Approximately 100 producers in EU
  - Great majority certified according to various standards, yet some smaller players might not
  - Sector willing to establish EU GHP guide
    - Pathogen monitoring accross production
    - Positive release seeds
  - EFSA opinion on risks associated with sprouts and seeds foreseen for October

# Industry perception of crisis response

- Role different investigation instruments
  - Epidemiology
  - Traceability
  - Monitoring
- Industry can assist authorities with each of the instruments
  - Reality check epidemiological conclusions
  - General industry facts to assist tracing forward
  - Industry monitoring results (4.000 samples analysed)

# Industry impact

- EU weekly turnover on vegetables approximately 1 billion EURO
- Consumption falls across EU, especially in DE
- Oversupply & limited shelf life => price pressure
- Whole supply chain affected: overcapacity logistic providers, traders, retailers (dedicated industry)
- Damages to supply chain in excess of 1 billion EURO
- Sales starting to recover, but price remains under pressure, full recovery will take years



# Industry impact

- EU compensation
  - June 7th
  - Package of 230 million EURO covering products withdrawn from the market (still well below cost of production)
  - 15 million EURO extra promotion funds in coming 3 years
  - Modest one off media campaign in July
- Industry still demands serious promotion efforts fully financed by EU (50 million EURO)
- Too little, too late for many growers => administration

# Industry impact

- Third country restrictions
  - Russia: import ban on EU vegetables lasted 1 month, now need for special certificate (re-exports still difficult)
  - Import bans: Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, UAE
  - Increased monitoring: Canada, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, South Korea, Taiwan, UAE, USA
  - Other measures: Ukraine, ...
- Progressive withdrawal/reduction of measures following confirmation of source

# Industry impact

- Image fresh produce
  - Brutal wake-up call for consumers which did not associate healthy products with food poisoning
  - Reputational damage cucumbers and Spain
  - Restoring confidence takes much longer than the few seconds it took to destroy it, even if mistakenly
  - ‘Kill’ steps very sensitive
- Responsibility authorities
  - Consumer education & awareness
  - Context food poisoning
  - Balanced crisis communication





# Conclusions

- Unprecedented crisis both for public health authorities and sector
- Crisis management and communication authorities
  - Cause of serious collateral damage
  - Role industry in investigations
  - Review systems in place
- Compensations are no excuse for zero risk approach  
Sector cannot afford another crisis like this
- No structural shortcomings fruit & vegetables sector
- Consumer education and awareness



FRUITS and VEGETABLES

REMEMBER  
SOME FRUITS  
& VEGETABLES  
ARE STILL  
SAFE TO EAT

J. WATTS



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[www.enjoyfresh.eu](http://www.enjoyfresh.eu)

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